

**The monarchy is more than the monarch:
Australian perceptions of the public life of Edward,
Prince of Wales, 1916-1936**

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to present inter-war historiography on Australians and the monarchy by providing a narrative for the previously under-researched evolution of the public life of Edward, Prince of Wales, in this country between approximately 1916 and 1936. The objectives are twofold: firstly, to provide an Australian account of what has been most commonly presented as a public life that resonated mainly within Britain, and in doing so illustrate the potency of the relationship that existed between Australia, as one of the Dominions, and the Crown. Secondly, through identifying the changing nature of Edward's appeal as espoused by the public, the press and political rulers over time, I aim to establish fresh insights into the localised preoccupations of Australian society and contribute to a greater understanding of the centrality of the monarch in the inter-war imperial imagination.

I conclude that Edward's supposedly democratic characteristics both enhanced and conflicted with inter-war Australian ideals of nationhood, and were founded on a fixed suite of expectations for the private and public life of the monarch. His persona was remarkably disassociated from religious or class-based affiliations, meaning that his personal appeal flourished in public, press and political perceptions. Nonetheless, I establish that contemporary Australians perceived the monarch as central to the survival of the Empire. Although the legal and political elements of the Kingship were flexible according to the best interests of Australian independence, traditional attitudes prevailed in matters of sexual modernity. Ultimately, for Australians, as part of an Empire caught between the devastation of two world wars, the survival of the monarchy prevailed over the survival of the monarch.

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	1
Edward's early life	6
The first royal tours	9
The abdication	16
Australia and the abdication	28
Australians and the monarchy	32
Australia and the Empire	38
Summary	41
Methodology	43
Outline	45
Chapter 1: The heir presumptive	47
A symbol of the Crown	48
An inspiration for peace	56
A modern exemplar	74
A member of the family	79
Chapter 2: The Empire's salesman	86
The British preparations	87
From the Australian perspective	96
Aboard H.M.S. <i>Renown</i>	122
Chapter 3: Our Digger Prince	128
Establishing a popular precedent in Victoria	129
Wooing the workers in New South Wales	139
Accommodating nationalism in Western Australia	146
Promoting expansion in South Australia	152
Instilling military patriotism in Tasmania	160
Subduing political tension in Queensland	164
Chapter 4: The bachelor King	172
Declining public and official estimation	173
A brief revival of popular affection	187

Impending trouble	191
The High Commissioner steps in	198
Lyons contains the matter.....	202
All is revealed.....	211
Chapter 5: A condemned man	217
Press commentary gathers pace.....	218
The Australian public respond	225
Political tensions increase	240
The abdication is officially confirmed	246
Chapter 6: Plain Mr. Windsor.....	255
Lyons breaks his silence.....	256
The formalities are completed.....	266
Australians resign themselves	273
The transfer of affection to a new King	283
Conclusion.....	296
Appendix.....	305
Bibliography	325
Primary sources	325
Archival material	325
Edited volumes of contemporary correspondence, memoirs and biographies	329
Newspaper articles.....	329
Records of Australian parliamentary debates and proceedings (<i>Hansard</i>)	341
Secondary sources	342
Books	342
Book chapters and sections.....	346
Journal articles	348
Online resources	350
Theses and conference papers	350

Introduction

Here was a man who plainly needed to express himself as a human being in order to be prince then king in his own way.

-*The Canberra Times*, 31 May 1972.¹

When Edward, Duke of Windsor, died on 28 May 1972, the Australian government was at first unsure how to respond. Although official procedure upon the demise of members of the royal family was well established, there was no obvious precedent for the case of a former King scandalously exiled from Britain almost forty years before. Records held by the National Archives of Australia (NAA) reveal how Labor leader Gough Whitlam struggled with the delicate balance between offering condolences to the ranks of the Duke's immediate relatives, and to his wife Wallis, who in an 'out of date and vindictive decision' had been deliberately denied her rightful title and position as a member of the royal family.² In the end, Whitlam decided against 'stirring the matter', and so after some deliberation Liberal prime minister William McMahon and his colleagues settled on a formulaic message of sympathy. This was communicated to Windsor, for the attention of the Duke's niece, Queen Elizabeth II, and to Paris for the grieving Duchess. McMahon's message to the latter incorporated a personal addendum, noting that as a consequence of the 'brilliant success' of his royal tour of Australia in 1920, Edward was 'remembered here with respect and affection.'³

The government's trouble with the Duke did not end with the issue of titles. The notorious matter of Edward's 1936 abdication of the throne, as prompted by the

¹ 'What might have been', *The Canberra Times*, A.C.T., 31 May 1972, p. 2.

² NAA, A1209, 1972/6551. Note for file regarding telephone conversation between Whitlam and E.J. Bunting, 30 May 1972.

³ NAA, A1209, 1972/6551. Telegram to British High Commission from Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 28 May 1972.

couple's relationship, also had to be tactfully dealt with. In a press release, McMahon simply alluded to an incident that 'deeply moved' the Commonwealth, moving quickly to draw attention instead to the royal tour of some five decades before. It was then, he stated, that the young Prince of Wales first 'captivated this country with his youth and charm', continuing subsequently to command respect due to his particular 'personal qualities.'⁴ Beyond these gestures, it was unclear what else was expected of the Australian government. The British High Commission in Canberra was tasked with finding out if any further action would be taken in the House of Commons, reporting back that the official acknowledgement in Britain was likely to be 'fairly low key', possibly even 'a token gesture only.'⁵ Accordingly, tentative plans for an Australian memorial service or a lengthy parliamentary adjournment were abandoned, apparently to the relief of all concerned.⁶ McMahon worried that 'we would be laughed at' for such a profligate gesture, although whether he meant by the British or the Australians, or both, is not clear.

In the Senate the next day, Liberal Tom Drake-Brockman offered a simple eulogy that also emphasised the success of Edward's 1920 tour and the 'qualities of essential humanity' that underpinned his early popularity with the Australian people.⁷ On the whole, the speeches in Parliament that day followed McMahon's lead and pointedly evaded any mention of the international uproar of 1936. The lone voice of Labor's Lionel Murphy was heard to offer the opinion that the couple had been treated 'miserably and shabbily' following the abdication.⁸ After standing for a few moments of silence, senators moved debate swiftly on to other business. It was by any estimation a forlorn farewell for a man once superlatively hailed as 'the most popular personage

⁴ NAA, A1209, 1972/6551. Statement by McMahon for the press, 28 May 1972.

⁵ NAA, A1209, 1972/6551. Note for the Secretary from K.W. Pearson, 29 May 1972

⁶ NAA, A1209, 1972/6551. Note for file by J.H. Sholtens, 1 June 1972; note for file by E.J. Bunting, 29 May 1972; note not intended for file by K.W. Pearson, 30 May 1972.

⁷ Parliament of Australia, Senate, 'Debates', 30 May 1972, p. 2223.

⁸ Ibid.

Australia has ever known.’⁹ Of course, the decision of an Australian government of the early 1970s to effect a ‘low key’ response to matters royal should not come as too great a surprise, considering the impassioned contemporary debates over Australia’s independence. It is also certain that this would not be the first obituary to favour discretion almost to the point of misremembering.

Nonetheless, the nuances discernible in these politicians’ treatment of the Duke’s death do raise some interesting questions. From a contemporary standpoint, these retrospective views tend to privilege Edward’s ‘personal qualities’, and were less eager to acknowledge the ignominious failure of his Kingship. The effect is of a public life that played out between two defining moments, from widespread approval in 1920 to an uncomfortable apathy following 1936. What is the basis for this perception of his character? Present historiography on the topic has little to offer on the topic, but even the most perfunctory foray into the contemporary press record reveals the heightened emotions that seem to confirm McMahon’s estimation of Edward’s early popularity as the beloved Prince of Wales. In July 1920, for example, Adelaide songwriter Ellie Wemyss was confident in her assertion that Edward was ‘a prince of men, and of all our hearts!’¹⁰ What then, can we make of the blunt appraisal made in December 1936 by the Rev. F. Barclay, a Presbyterian clergyman in Wentworth, New South Wales, that Edward had ‘failed the British Empire’?¹¹ It seems that by and large, despite over two decades as the celebrated Prince of Wales, Edward had forfeited with his throne the enduring affection of Australians. An obvious explanation might be that the shock of the abdication and the uneasy legacy of Edward’s later political ambitions simply eclipsed the remarkable success of his public life as a young man, but even so this can only be part of the story.

⁹ ‘Prince Of Wales At Randwick’, *Sydney Mail*, N.S.W., 23 June 1920, p. 39.

¹⁰ ‘OUR PRINCE OF HEARTS’, *The Register*, Adelaide, S.A., 20 July 1920, p. 9.

¹¹ “‘FAILED EMPIRE’”, *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate*, Parramatta, N.S.W., 17 December 1936, p. 7.

It is this shift in Australian perceptions of Edward's public persona, or the wax and wane of sentiment between the 1910s and 1930s, which this thesis aims to reconcile.¹² The objectives are twofold: firstly, to provide a chronological narrative for the previously under-researched evolution of Edward's public life in Australia, and secondly, to turn the lens of this examination on the key localised traits of Australian society of the time. What can these perceptions reveal about the cultural dynamics of the time? I have set out to identify the contours of this connection and in doing so draw wider inferences about the attitudes of Australian society as a whole towards their inter-war relationship with the British monarchy. Such a case study will contribute to present historiography on Australians and the monarchy by adding to a greater understanding of the importance of the monarch in the Australian imagination. Furthermore, although this thesis is not intended to be comparative, many of the themes highlighted therein also resonated widely across the other white settler Dominions of New Zealand, South Africa and Canada.

These objectives address a gap in present scholarship relating to Edward's early public life in Australia. As I will show, although the biographical literature is extensive, neither his royal tour nor abdication have been examined from an Australian perspective. Edward was among the most controversial and oft-chronicled figures of the twentieth century and hence his life has generated hundreds of publications. Perhaps the first biography was published as early as 1916, and they would appear with increasing regularity throughout the 1920s, in even greater numbers following 1936 and yet again after his death in 1972.¹³ Later twentieth century publications present almost exclusively the perspective of British or North American authors focusing on the British

¹² This thesis explores a chronology of events occurring, in the main, between 1916 and 1936, and so encompassing the Edward's first encounter with Australians to the period immediately following his abdication. I also draw upon contextual material outside of this timeframe.

Edward was known throughout this period by three differing titles: Prince, King and Duke.

¹³ Among the earliest works is David Williamson's *The Prince of Wales: a biography* (London: George Newnes, 1916).

context of his life.¹⁴ This has helped generate the widespread acceptance that Edward's life comprised a primarily British story. Instead, as this thesis will argue, this was a life that resonated across Australia as one of the white settler Dominions, the self-governing former colonies that comprised the Empire and held a common allegiance to the Crown, itself most usefully defined by Mark McKenna as the ultimate and singular symbol of moral, legal and political authority.¹⁵

Despite some recent advances in related inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural research by other Commonwealth-based historians, a full-length monograph publication concerning the importance and evolution of Edward's public life outside of Britain is still outstanding.¹⁶ It is therefore my broad intention in this and following sections to demonstrate the potential for this area of study alongside existing narratives explaining the rise of his public profile from the 1910s onward. Accordingly, this chapter will first set out the major milestones of Edward's public life, beginning with his adolescence before the First World War. Here I draw upon the respected works by British biographers Philip Ziegler and Frances Donaldson, with the aim of establishing an objective character assessment, or at least offer a view of the man as perceived by the most astute of his biographers.¹⁷ Localised Australian perceptions as discussed in later chapters may be usefully considered with this well-informed story in mind.

¹⁴ For example, Patrick Balfour, *The Windsor years: the life of Edward, as Prince of Wales, King, and Duke of Windsor* (London: Collins, 1967); J. Bryan III and Charles Murphy, *The Windsor story* (London: Grenada, 1979); Richard Durnin, *King Edward VIII (The Duke of Windsor), 1894-1972* (New Brunswick: English-Speaking Union, 1994).

¹⁵ Mark McKenna, 'The Crown', in Melissa Harper and Richard White (eds.), *Symbols of Australia* (Sydney, N.S.W.: U.N.S.W. Press, 2010), pp. 33-37, p. 34.

¹⁶ One exception is the work of New Zealand historian Hector Bolitho, although this was published several decades before Edward's death and hence cannot be said to offer a full biographical account. For example, *King Edward VIII: His life and reign* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1937).

¹⁷ Philip Ziegler, *King Edward VIII: the official biography* (London: Collins, 1990); Frances Donaldson, *Edward VIII* (London: Futura Publications Ltd, 1976). I describe these authors as 'respected' due to their status within the discipline of popular history, and their access to restricted material at the National Archives at Kew (TNA) and the Royal Archives (RA).

Secondly, I provide an overview of the extent of existing scholarship on Edward's royal tour of 1920, within the context of his early inter-war royal tours of the Dominions more generally. Thirdly, I examine existing accounts of the Edward's abdication of 1936. The fourth section determines the status of existing scholarship that specifically examines the Australian response to the event. I then move beyond the two events central to this thesis to identify the broader areas of research to which it contributes. I consider existing scholarship on the relationship between Australians and the monarchy, and then examine the twentieth century context of Australia's changing relationship with Britain and their shared imperial past.

Edward's early life

As is well known, Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David was born on 23 June 1894 at White Lodge, Richmond Park, the eldest son of the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George V and Queen Mary).¹⁸ As third in line to the throne, Edward's childhood received little public scrutiny. He later recalled how 'I grew up before the age of the flash camera ... we were not often recognized on the street.'¹⁹ Restraint proved short-lived and his public responsibilities only expanded as he grew older. Alongside developed a set of expectations for the public life of the prospective King. Many contemporary accounts demonstrate a common insistence on the Prince's suitability as the future leader of disparate peoples living across a far-flung Empire.²⁰ The English biographer Arthur Groom, for example, argued that even as a boy, Edward

¹⁸ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁹ Edward, Duke of Windsor, *A king's story: the memoirs of H.R.H. the Duke of Windsor K.G.* (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1951), p. 34.

²⁰ For example, F. E. Verney, *H.R.H.: a character study of the Prince of Wales* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928); Arthur Groom, *Edward the eighth: our king* (Watford: Allied Newspapers, 1936); Bolitho, *King Edward VIII*.

‘displayed a great interest in the life and customs of people of other lands.’²¹ His profile steadily increased as he completed his naval education, but grew most notably after his father ascended the throne in 1910 as King George V, and yet again after his investiture as the Prince of Wales in 1911. In 1912, there followed an undistinguished stint at Magdalen College, Oxford. Contemporary biographer Francis Verney viewed these experiences as creating one whose ‘conduct would be watched by the inhabitants of half the habitable earth.’²²

In his discussion of Edward’s adolescent years, Ziegler offers a sense of a diffident individual lacking in intellectual curiosity and given to mild excesses, which were mostly expended through physical sports and high spirits.²³ The Prince resented attempts to influence his choice of friends and eschewed ceremonial functions that ‘set him on a pedestal for his fellows to goggle at and worship.’²⁴ As he grew into a self-assured young man, his preference to live out the comfortable existence of a minor aristocrat became an increasingly unlikely prospect. Donaldson has explained how the Prince’s unpromising academic career came to an end with the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914.²⁵ The 20-year-old’s desire to join the Allied forces in France and Belgium would be instrumental in the making of his character. ‘What does it matter if I am killed? I have four brothers’, he reportedly urged Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War.²⁶ Rejecting his assigned desk-based duties, he devoted his energies to closing in on the front line, despite a near miss when his car came under fire and his driver killed.²⁷ ‘A bad shelling will always produce the Prince of Wales’, recounted

²¹ Groom, *Edward the eighth*, pp. 18-19.

²² Verney, *H.R.H.*, p. 23.

²³ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, pp. 37-40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁵ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 49.

²⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

members of his regiment.²⁸ As the following chapter will discuss, Edward first came into contact with Australians during a 1916 visit to Anzac troops stationed in Egypt, and again in France and England by the end of the war in 1918.

Like many previous royals, the Prince's coming of age also heralded the beginnings of fervent speculation from worldwide observers as to his eventual marriage. Although by now perhaps the world's most eligible bachelor, the Prince was in no hurry to marry. For much of his twenties, he was, as an equerry remarked, 'continuously in the throes of one shattering and absorbing love affair after another.'²⁹ Most of these were fleeting, punctuated by a smaller number of grand passions. Donaldson has pondered the contradictory aspects of Edward's nature when it came to relationships with other people, concluding that the fervent form of his romantic attachment was remarkably consistent throughout his life.³⁰ Socialites Marion Coke, Freda Dudley Ward, and later Thelma Furness and Wallis Simpson all offered the Prince a nurturing type of affection, and all were married to other men. Freda in particular captivated the Prince for over a decade between 1919, when he returned from the army, and 1931 when the focus of his adoration turned irrevocably towards Wallis. In the early years, the immature Prince's devotion to Freda was hardly unusual or cause for official concern; after all, members of the royal family and aristocracy had for generations conducted discrete extra-marital affairs, shielded and observed only by the close-knit upper tiers of London Society.³¹ While he was young, Edward's relationships did little to dispel the comfortable and widely held expectation that he would one day make a

²⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁹ Alan Lascelles, quoted in Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 222.

³⁰ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 56.

³¹ The term 'Society' in the British context is generally held to indicate a small closed group of individuals holding greater wealth or social prestige than the remainder of the population. Many a blind eye therein had been turned to the affair of Edward's grandfather, King Edward VII, with Lily Langtry during his marriage to Queen Alexandra.

strategic marriage alliance with a woman suitable to be his consort.

The first royal tours

By the early 1920s, as the Prince's pursuit of his private life became ever more pivotal to his happiness, he was at the same time pushed ever more into the public eye. Of Edward's apparent frustration with the limitations of 'princing', Ziegler writes perceptively that the young man was ill equipped to deal with the abundance of post-war pleasures. His character thrived amid 'the heady and dangerous delights of liberty.'³² Speaking of the younger generations and those who had survived the warfare, Donaldson describes a '*jeunesse dorée* who danced with a feverish determination to shut out the memories of the terrible past.'³³ This unruly optimism and appetite for leisure widened the generational gap between Edward and his father, a traditionalist who espoused the moral code of the previous century. Even as he embarked on his public life, Edward's behaviour was already fatally at odds with the conventional tastes of older generations. Nonetheless, an apparent solution soon presented itself. The King never quite recovered from a serious wartime riding accident, and so as the Prince entered his late twenties he began to take on more public duties. This included a succession of visits to the Dominions. These grand popular events took place on the official pretext of thanking the Empire populations for their wartime contribution to the Allied forces, but also served as a crucial reminder to the obstinate young man of his inherited duties. Canada was first, in 1919, then New Zealand and Australia the following year.³⁴ In 1921-22, Edward visited India, and then South Africa in 1925.

³² Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 107.

³³ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 83.

³⁴ The Prince visited Canada again in 1923, 1924 and 1927.

The local reception of the Prince's tours, occurring during what Vernon Bogdanor has identified as a time of critical importance to the Dominions as they embarked on a process of reinvention as 'separate sovereign states and distinct international identities', is undoubtedly fertile ground for scholarship.³⁵ The tours have attracted some modest attention from other Commonwealth-based historians. Given this shared Dominion status and the comparative potential of these themes, their conclusions may be usefully considered within the Australian context. For example, in his 1969 study of Canadian perceptions of Edward's public life, Gordon Beadle suggested that his appeal in 1919 lay in his capacity to symbolise 'the return of peace and [personify] the hope of the future.'³⁶ Many of Beadle's arguments also resonate strongly within the Australian context, most notably the related contention that the Prince's character was largely a creation of the press. He identifies the Canadian press as responsible for magnifying the significance of his tours, noting that journalists 'professed to see in his unorthodox style and impromptu speeches evidence of statesmanship of the highest order', and endowed Edward with unjustifiable virtues and youthfulness long after he ceased to embody those qualities.³⁷

Others agree that the popular success of the Dominion tours relied heavily on the continuing approval of the public and press, and only rarely did cracks emerge in the Prince's pleasant and apolitical façade. For example, in her 2012 article South African historian Hilary Sapire convincingly demonstrated the extent of localised tensions and controversies at play during the royal tours of India in 1921-22 and Africa in 1925.³⁸ Edward's stubborn character also posed a threat to the outward success of his tours.

³⁵ Vernon Bogdanor, *The monarchy and the constitution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 245.

³⁶ Gordon Beadle, 'Canada and the Abdication of Edward VIII', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 4/3, pp. 33-46, p. 34.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁸ Hilary Sapire, 'Ambiguities of Loyalism: the Prince of Wales in India and Africa, 1921-2 and 25', *History Workshop Journal*, 73/1 (2012), pp. 37-65.

Discussing the visit to India in 1921 and then Japan, Ziegler explains how positive public perceptions were sustained only due to the concerted efforts of the Prince's staff in ensuring their royal charge behaved dutifully in the presence of the public and press, and discretely in private.³⁹ This impression of the Prince as possessing *joie de vivre* yet not always dutiful integrity is borne out in Alistair Cooke's observation that:

It was not that he had ever been a deeply serious man, much less an intellectual ... But he also had a genuine curiosity about the lands he had to visit and the gorgeous range of human oddities who inhabited them ... his official duties, though routinely irksome, provided both a discipline and a curiosity shop that kept him lively and inquisitive.⁴⁰

Recent studies have further interrogated the construction of the façade that overlaid the Prince's character. The American historians Ryan Linkoff and Laura Nym Mayhall, for example, support Beadle's contention that Edward's outward personality was a potent force manufactured and perpetuated by the international press.⁴¹ Mayhall identifies the post-war period as a time when a monarch could also be a 'celebrity', a development she allies with advances in photographic and other visual technology, as well as the less reverent attitudes of the press itself.⁴² Mayhall hails the Prince as the 'male sensation of Hollywood', that is, attractive, affable, and respected in comparable terms to American actors, public intellectuals and fashion models of the 1920s.⁴³ Swiss historian Alexis Schwartzenbach has also examined the particularity of Edward's appeal, identifying 'the accidental facts of his extremely youthful looks, his great charm and spontaneity as well as his splendid photogenic smile.'⁴⁴ Although existing literature

³⁹ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, pp. 142-43, 146-47.

⁴⁰ Alistair Cooke, 'Foreword', in Robert Gray and Jane Olivier, *Edward VIII, the man we lost: a pictorial study* (Salisbury: Compton Press, 1972), no pagination.

⁴¹ Ryan Linkoff, 'The photographic attack on his royal highness: the Prince of Wales, Wallis Simpson and the prehistory of the paparazzi', *Photography & Culture*, 4/3 (2011), pp. 277-92; Laura E. Nym Mayhall, 'The Prince of Wales Versus Clark Gable: Anglophone Celebrity and Citizenship Between the Wars', *Cultural and Social History*, 4/4 (2007), pp. 529-29.

⁴² Mayhall, 'The Prince of Wales Versus Clark Gable', p. 532.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

⁴⁴ Alexis Schwartzenbach, 'Love, Marriage and Divorce: American and European Reactions to the Abdication of Edward VIII', in Luisa Passerini, Liliana Ellena, and Alexander C. T. Geppert

examining the Prince's early public life and royal tours has not thus far examined the Australian context in any depth, it does establish that the world's press were instrumental in perpetuating a romanticised perception of his personality that existed independently of his constitutional position, which in turn masked many of his shortcomings.

These authors' conclusions concerning new world monarchist and egalitarian responses to the Prince may also be usefully considered in this thesis' exploration of the Australian context of his early public life. Before now, Edward's royal tour of Australia in 1920 has been the subject of little analysis from historians. Generally, although a strategic 'device for maintaining imperial unity' offering much potential insight into Australia's cultural relations with the monarchy, the study of royal tours sparked little Australian scholarly interest for much of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ In her valuable 1996 study of Queen Elizabeth's 1954 tour, Jane Connors attributed this neglect to the conventions of mid to later twentieth century historical practice, which privileged matters of politics or economics over intangible aspects of everyday life, such as domestic, emotional, or family preoccupations.⁴⁶ Sentiment lends itself less readily to precise examination, and as Connors suggests, left-wing critics easily dismissed studies of the popular Australian attachment to the monarchy as a passive preoccupation of the easily manipulated.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the gathering pace of scholarship on Australians and the monarchy has done much to address this gap in more recent years, although research on the 1920 royal tour has yet to catch up. Some useful theoretical parallels may first be drawn from

(eds.), *New dangerous liaisons: discourses on Europe and love in the twentieth century* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 137-57, p. 151.

⁴⁵ Geoffrey Bolton, *Britain's legacy overseas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 112-13.

⁴⁶ Jane Connors, 'The Glittering Thread: The 1954 Royal Tour of Australia', PhD thesis (University of Technology, Sydney, 1996), pp. 20-21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 20-21.

a small body of publications examining aspects of the local reaction to other royal tours undertaken in both Australia and the other Dominions. As Charles Reed's work on nineteenth century Empire tours has shown, the enacting of civic ritual festivals, such as royal tours, reflects in meaningful ways the imperial identities and local preoccupations of a community.⁴⁸ In addition to Connors' work, Judith Bassett's thoughtful 1987 study of the 1901 royal tour of New Zealand, or Phillip Buckner's examination of the Canadian tour of the same year, for example, have also proved how analysis of shared events can be illuminating of local cultural dynamics.⁴⁹ In 1995, David Lowe examined the impact of the international context on Queen Elizabeth II's royal tour of Australia in 1954.⁵⁰ More recently, Cindy McCreery examined the local and gendered response of Sydney's population to the attempted assassination of Prince Alfred during the 1868 royal tour of Australia.⁵¹ These works confirm royal tours of Australia as an area of rich socio-historical interest.

Within this illuminating historiographical context, the 1920 royal tour has yet to be fully investigated. Connors' identification of the diverted focus of mid to late twentieth century historical practice probably explains why, until relatively recently, analyses of this event have been mostly confined within biographical chronologies of imperial tours. As Donaldson, for example, has outlined, over almost three months the Prince would visit over one hundred regional and urban destinations on a 14,000 kilometre round trip through Victoria, New South Wales, across to Western Australia, then returning eastwards through South Australia and Tasmania before finally

⁴⁸ Charles V. Reed, *Royal tourists, colonial subjects and the making of a British world, 1860–1911* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

⁴⁹ Judith Bassett, 'A Thousand Miles of Loyalty: The Royal Tour of 1901', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21/1 (1987), pp. 125-38; Phillip Buckner, 'Casting daylight upon magic: Deconstructing the royal tour of 1901 to Canada', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 31/2 (2003), pp. 158-89.

⁵⁰ David Lowe, '1954: The Queen and Australia in the World', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 46 (1995), pp. 1-10.

⁵¹ Cindy McCreery, 'Rude Interruption: Colonial Manners, Gender and Prince Alfred's Visit to New South Wales, 1868', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 49/4 (2013), pp. 437-456.

proceeding north to Queensland.⁵² Huge crowds of all political persuasions greeted him at every turn. The gruelling itinerary prescribed the laying of many foundation stones, the inspection of public works, participation in reviews, balls and garden parties, and the extending of thousands of handshakes to dignitaries and citizens alike. Some estimation of the tour's popular attraction can be gleaned from a July 1920 description of the scene in Windsor, New South Wales, where:

[T]here has never been an occasion when there was such a manifestation of goodwill and enthusiasm towards one man ... an absolute roar of cheers rent the air as the Prince drove up. Hats and flags were waved, and the scene was one such as we have never before witnessed in Windsor.⁵³

To the twenty first century eye, the tour appears a memorable milestone in Australia's relationship with the Prince. Whether this registers a moment of enthusiasm for Edward as an individual or Edward as his father's representative, or some combination of the two, is less easy to ascertain. Donaldson, for one, places great emphasis on the cohesive power of this affection, arguing that the Prince's tours aroused 'emotions then which attached the people to the crown, survived the restlessness of the post-war years, the abdication crisis and the transfer of loyalty to the new King and Queen.'⁵⁴ While this may be true, the background to the development of these emotions in an Australian context remains obscure. Considering that, as McKenna has pointed out, Australia lacked, to some degree, a class-based hierarchy topped by an aristocracy or an established church in quite the same way as Britain, and so chiefly experienced royal tours promoted as popular and secular occasions, it follows that

⁵² Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, pp. 75-82.

⁵³ 'The Royal Visit', *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, N.S.W., 2 July 1920, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 80.

studies of this event are likely revealing of the interplay of localised cultural dynamics of the time.⁵⁵

Although rare, comparative literature is not entirely absent. Some important historical context has been established, most notably by the 1980 article by Kevin Fewster. Here the author argued for Edward's visit as setting Australia's direction 'towards a closer imperial relationship when, if it had so desired, greater autonomy could have been won.'⁵⁶ Although now dating to some thirty-five years ago, Fewster's conclusions indicate that amid the imperial legislative reinvention of the 1920s, royal tours created an unexpected phenomenon whereby people drew closer to the symbolism of the Crown as the major unifying authority within the Commonwealth. Fewster's work does much to confirm the strategic importance of the tour and the unsettled cultural context in which it took place, but also highlights that, in light of more recent critiques of Edward's public life, there is still much work to be done on unravelling the ill-defined relationship between affection for the Prince as an individual, and as representative of the monarchy.

Following Fewster's publication, the tour received little further scholarly attention throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, although the topic is now experiencing a resurgence of interest. In 2015, David Hill offered a brief descriptive account drawn from contemporary newspaper sources, concluding uncritically that the visit was an 'outstanding and unqualified success in cementing relations between

⁵⁵ Mark McKenna, 'Monarchy: from reverence to indifference', in Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds.), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 261-87, pp. 272-73. There is also a tradition in Britain of the monarchy being besmirched by the misdeeds of the aristocracy as a consequence of its close alignment with them. For further discussion, see Andrzej Olechnowicz, 'Historians and the modern British monarchy', in Andrzej Olechnowicz (ed.), *The monarchy and the British nation, 1780 to the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 6-44; Antony Taylor, 'An aristocratic monarchy and popular republicanism, 1830-1940', in *ibid*, pp. 188-219.

⁵⁶ Kevin Fewster, 'Politics, Pageantry and Purpose: The 1920 Tour of Australia by the Prince of Wales', *Labour History*, 38 (1980), pp. 59-66, p. 59.

Australia and Britain.⁵⁷ Also published in 2015, Connors' pictorial monograph *Royal Visits to Australia* identifies this as 'the sexiest of all the royal tours.'⁵⁸ Although their scrutiny is necessarily limited by the broader chronological scope of their respective studies, Hill and Connors' work demonstrates the increasing level of popular interest in the 1920 tour as an event of some historical significance. It also hints at the existence of an extensive material and archival record held by the NAA and the National Library of Australia (NLA), much of which remains unexplored. Further research has abundant potential to cast further light on the basis for Australia's affection for both the Prince and the monarchy.

The abdication

If the tour was a 'tumultuous success', how did this influence the relationship between the Prince and the Australian people?⁵⁹ No historian has examined Australian perceptions of Edward's rising public profile just prior to and during his brief Kingship, although there can be no doubt that this period has provoked intense fascination for generations of British and North American historians and biographers alike.⁶⁰ In contrast to the brevity of scholarly engagement with the royal tour of 1920, Edward's abdication of 1936 must be the most intensively chronicled royal event of the twentieth century.⁶¹ Whether scholarly or salacious, such prolonged attention confirms the

⁵⁷ David Hill, *Australians and the monarchy* (Australia: William Heinemann, 2015), p. 173. A similarly-themed illustrated publication was also produced by Juliet Rieden and titled *The Royals in Australia* (Australia: Pan Macmillan, 2015).

⁵⁸ Jane Connors, *Royal visits to Australia* (Canberra, A.C.T.: National Library of Australia, 2015).

⁵⁹ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 133.

⁶⁰ Among the earliest works is Warre Bradley Wells' *Why Edward Went. Crown, clique and church, etc.* (New York: R. M. McBride & Co., 1937). Others include Max Aitken Beaverbrook, *The abdication of King Edward VIII*, ed. A.J.P. Taylor (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966); Michael Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII* (London: Black Swan, 1991); Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*.

⁶¹ For example, Brian Inglis, *Abdication* (London: Hodder, 1966); Susan Williams, *The People's King: the true story of the abdication* (London: Penguin, 2004).

incident as pivotal in the early twentieth century history of the British monarchy, and by extension a moment with significant legislative and cultural implications for the Empire. Many of these accounts have adopted a determinist flavour that has served to cement the idea of a renegade King patently unsuited for his position, endorsing and legitimising a particular understanding of the abdication as inevitable; a view most notably promoted by the Establishment of the time. In the writing of this thesis, I have sought to tread carefully around determinist blueprints of Edward's public life as an inevitable decline, although ultimately my conclusions are broadly similar. In any case, although much of the British context to this episode is well established, the identification of any disparity in the Australian perspective, or that of any other Dominion, remains lacking.

The literature shows how, as the Prince left his late twenties behind and entered his thirties, he maintained his hectic lifestyle of social and official engagements and, outwardly, his feted 'Prince Charming' persona. Ziegler has considered the determinist assumption that Edward throughout the 1920s and early 1930s had sought ways to avoid his eventual accession to the throne, but concluded instead that he understood the potential influence the position offered, if he could bide his time in the tedious role as heir. The Prince 'could never do more than alleviate the burden of his life', Ziegler writes, whereas as King he believed he could 'create a new, streamlined monarchy which would allow him the privacy and liberty he desired.'⁶² In the meantime, his preference for dangerous activities, such as hunting on horseback and flying in aeroplanes, and especially his private life caused increasing concern to the Establishment.⁶³ His staff was becoming unable to conceal his disdain for royal

⁶² Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 168.

⁶³ The 'Establishment' was not a term commonly in use during the early decades of the twentieth century, but for the purposes of this thesis is defined in its British context as a closed group drawn from across the press, court, social elite and government that holds the balance of power in a nation-state.

‘stunting’ and his disinclination to marry and produce an heir of his own. Beadle suggests that the Prince’s behaviour at this time indicates that he had perhaps begun to believe the hyperbole that surrounded his persona, and disastrously conflate his own personal popularity with that of the institution he was held to represent.⁶⁴

Other cracks were beginning to emerge. Although outside the scope of this thesis in timeframe and subject matter, a body of literature alleging that Edward’s later period as Prince of Wales coincided with the development of his alleged sympathy for German National Socialism of the 1930s has done much to sour his later reputation, and so cannot be excluded from this survey. The lurid recent publication by royal observer Andrew Morton, for example, serves only to perpetuate the Duke and Duchess as traitorous Nazi collaborators.⁶⁵ The issue may never be laid to rest, but the truth probably lies closer to Bloch’s interpretation of the Prince as a man aware of his lack of real political influence but nonetheless possessing inclinations consistent with the commonplace opinion held by many members of the public, government and Foreign Office during the 1930s; that is, that communism was a force to be subdued and that appeasement was necessary to divert the prospect of another war.⁶⁶ Ziegler firmly refutes the notion of Edward succumbing to Adolf Hitler’s alleged plan to reinstate him as a dictator in occupied Britain, arguing that he was ‘a patriot who would never have wished his country be defeated.’⁶⁷

All this aside, it cannot be denied that Edward was a preoccupied man during the early months of his reign following the death of his father on 20 January 1936. He had for several years been enthralled by Wallis Simpson, a divorced American woman with

⁶⁴ Beadle, ‘Canada and the Abdication of Edward VIII’, p. 35.

⁶⁵ Andrew Morton, *17 carnations: the royals, the Nazis and the biggest cover-up in history* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2015).

⁶⁶ Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII*, p. 33; for further discussion, see Michael Bloch, *Operation Willi: the plot to kidnap the Duke of Windsor July 1940* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984).

⁶⁷ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. xv.

whom it appeared he could have no future. Born Bessiewallis Warfield in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1896, the object of the King's affection remains one of the most mysterious women of the twentieth century. Several authors have devoted a dizzying amount of energy to uncovering the nature of her appeal.⁶⁸ As biographer Anne Sebba notes, understanding is complicated by the sexual double standards of the day that served to paint Wallis as the villain of the affair as well as the bewildering welter of commentary that surrounded her from the moment she entered Edward's social orbit. As '[observers] cannot imagine such a woman they have invented an image of her', she writes.⁶⁹ In view of her unremarkable appearance, Charles Higham, for example, suggested in 1988 that Wallis' talents lay in releasing Edward's sexual dysfunctions using skills learnt during a sojourn to China.⁷⁰ Despite the fact that the King was known to have successfully seduced numerous women and held grand passions for two or three, this notion has not been allowed to derail a good story. The truth is probably far simpler. In short, the King believed that he and Wallis were 'made for each other and that there was no other honest way of meeting the situation than marrying her', wrote his friend Walter Monckton.⁷¹

This attachment would be the defining characteristic of the King's short reign. The present literature provides valuable insight into the way the abdication played out in Britain. Contrary to Ziegler's prediction of Edward's reforming ambitions on ascending the throne, Bloch advanced the view that the new King was instead deeply uneasy with his rapidly elevated public position. He pinpoints Edward's apparent disregard for the 'chaos and suspicion' that engrossed his band of ill-chosen and mistrustful courtiers, his

⁶⁸ Examples include Greg King, *The Duchess of Windsor: the uncommon life of Wallis Simpson* (London: Aurum Press, 1999); Charles Higham, *Wallis: secret lives of the Duchess of Windsor* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988).

⁶⁹ Anne Sebba, *That woman: the life of Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor* (UK: Hachette, 2011), p. 2.

⁷⁰ Higham, *Wallis*, p. 37.

⁷¹ Quoted in Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII*, p. 40.

reluctance to formally reside at Buckingham Palace and his lack of consideration for public criticism all as demonstrating his overwhelming preoccupation with prolonging his liaison with Wallis at any cost.⁷² Edward's lifestyle and apparent irreverence for his father's traditions rankled with his staff. Clive Wigram, his Private Secretary, wrote cautiously of his new charge as 'another type of King. One of a new generation, a product of the war.'⁷³ Within months, Wigram would resign over 'the King's habits; his subservience to Mrs Simpson's wishes; his consequent extravagance; his treatment of staff at Buckingham Palace [and] his lack of discretion.'⁷⁴

Although at this time the King's popular outward persona remained undisturbed, the succession of events that would conclude with abdication was already in motion. Gossip was rife along the official, familial and informal channels of communication between the top levels of the Civil Service, the British government and Society, meaning that it was unlikely that the relationship would remain concealed for long. 'If it becomes generally known', British prime minister Stanley Baldwin told a friend, 'the country won't stand it.'⁷⁵ Wallis had not only divorced one man but was still married to another, and so in the eyes of the Establishment and Church of England was utterly unsuited to the role of King's consort, even if she were free to marry him.

The legislative ramifications of this moral dilemma encompasses many elements of interest to social historians. In particular, the question of the extent to which Baldwin's prediction extended to the 'British' populations outside of Britain is an interesting one. Australia's constitution of 1901 set out a system of governance based on a cooperative system of executive power under the sovereignty of the Crown, administered by a representative Governor-General and within an association of

⁷² Ibid., pp. 62-63, 65.

⁷³ NLA, MS 2852/8/9, Lord Gowrie papers. Letter to Hore-Ruthven from Wigram, 19 February 1936.

⁷⁴ TNA, CAB 127/157. H. Wilson, unpublished notes, undated, likely December 1936.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Williams, *The People's King*, pp. 68-69.

autonomous Dominions. As mentioned in the preceding pages, at this time the Dominions' relationship to the Crown was undergoing a gradual transformation towards greater independence. As Joan Beaumont has explained, even though the post-Federation Australian government was entitled to manage its own 'external affairs', politicians still deferred to London in matters of imperial foreign policy during and after the war.⁷⁶ During wartime, the Imperial War Conference of 1917 sought to re-confirm these friendly associations amongst the Dominions in issues of defence.⁷⁷ Australian influence was felt following the Treaty of Versailles in the establishment of the League of Nations, and the 1926 Balfour Declaration served as Britain's acceptance of the Dominions' growing political and diplomatic independence.⁷⁸ By 1931, the Statute of Westminster had begun the formal process of devolving British parliamentary control over the Dominions, where no British Act of Parliament could apply without consent to the Australian federal Parliament, which in turn could enact its own legislation. Over time, this legislative distance helped recast the former colonial relationship as a voluntary allegiance between the Dominions and Britain, critically connected by the symbolism of the monarch as a guardian of imperial interests.

As Mort outlines, this legislative reinvention registered a profound and significant shift in the monarch's role from the guarantor of democratic politics to the 'focal point of a system of media orchestrated populism, grounded in an economy of personal identification between ordinary subjects and themselves.'⁷⁹ As we shall see, this conflict between the monarch as a political icon and as an individual personality favoured by human interest journalism would surface most significantly during the

⁷⁶ Joan Beaumont, "'Unitedly we have fought': imperial loyalty and the Australian war effort", *International Affairs*, 90/2 (2014), pp. 397-412, p. 399.

⁷⁷ Bogdanor, *The monarchy and the constitution*, p. 244-45.

⁷⁸ Peter Spearritt, 'Introduction', in Peter Spearritt, John Arnold & David Walker (eds.), *Out of empire: the British dominion of Australia* (Port Melbourne, Vic.: Mandarin, 1993), pp. 1-15, p. 5.

⁷⁹ Mort, 'Love in a Cold Climate', p. 10.

debates over the King's character during the abdication episode. Although the terms of the Statute were not fully applicable to all the Dominions in 1936, also of particular relevance to the monarch was the preamble, which states that 'any alteration in the Law touching the succession to the throne or the royal style or titles shall thereafter require the assent as well of the Parliaments of all the Dominions as of the Parliament of the United Kingdom.'⁸⁰

This growing tension between constitutional distance and royal populism could only spell trouble in Buckingham Palace. As Godfrey Thomas, Edward's new Private Secretary, mused, the white settler Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada were connected mainly 'by their common loyalty to the Crown. What will happen if they find their sole link is in the person of a sovereign for whom they have little respect?'⁸¹ Rather than the issue of adultery between Edward and Wallis, the Establishment allied with the established Church of England in moral condemnation of divorce. Although the King was free to marry whomever he wished (except a Catholic), legally, at least, there were no restrictions on his marriage, his role as 'Defender of the Faith' required him to support, publicly in any case, the Church's rejection of divorce. As long as Wallis remained the King's mistress only, her divorced status was inconsequential.

The King resoundingly underestimated these powerful moral codes and imperial sensitivities. In July 1936, a few months into his reign, Wallis initiated her divorce proceedings. To those aware of the affair, this move was the clearest indication yet that

⁸⁰ Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth affairs: problems of external policy, 1931-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 36. Although neither Australia nor New Zealand had formally adopted the Statute by 1936, they were nonetheless expected to behave as if they had, according to the shared attitudes of the Dominion coalition. It was not until the Australia Acts of the 1980s that the colonial legislative relationship with Britain was formally dissolved.

⁸¹ Quoted in Philip Murphy, *Monarchy and the end of empire: the House of Windsor, the British government, and the post-war Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 24-25.

the couple eventually wished to marry. If another suitor were waiting in the wings, she would be legally free to marry again by April 1937, only one month before the planned Coronation. Things went from bad to worse between August and September, when the couple undertook a lavish Mediterranean cruise aboard the luxury steam yacht *Nahlin*, attended at every stop by the world's press. Ernest Simpson was conspicuously absent.

This indulgent jaunt laid on for sixteen of the King's friends must have seemed woefully inopportune to observers, undertaken as it was at a time of economic distress and amid growing political tension across Europe. A few months prior, Britain and France observed as Hitler took steps to contravene the Treaty of Versailles by remilitarising the Rhineland in March 1936. Britain was also engaged in dispute over fascist Italy's military campaigns in Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and further unrest followed in July 1936 with the breakout of civil war in Spain.⁸² With the benefit of hindsight, Bloch has suggested that, even by this stage, the King had made up his mind that he meant to marry Wallis, and as such there was never any real conflict, or the oft-described 'crisis', between him and the British government.⁸³ This is not to say that it did not appear so at the time, with both parties never certain what move the other was planning. However, in contrast to the way it later played out in the world's press, the disproportionately feared constitutional 'crisis' ultimately failed to materialise.

The ramifications of the King's actions on those of the world's press is also of interest to social historians. The successful suppression of commentary concerning the couple's relationship remains an extraordinary feat attributable to some degree to the top-heavy nature of British Society and the attitudes held by the press proprietors of 1936. Rather than informing the electorate, many in Fleet Street saw their role as

⁸² For further contemporary discussion, see 'STIRRING EVENTS OF 1936', *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Qld, 30 December 1936, p. 13.

⁸³ Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII*, p. 16, 108.

assisting the Establishment in maintaining stability.⁸⁴ In mid-1936, Edward made an agreement with powerful media magnates Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere to limit publicity of the Simpsons' impending divorce hearing and its association with himself.⁸⁵ The self-imposed 'gentleman's agreement' continued throughout the British government's management of the unfolding situation, until the gratuitous remarks of an English bishop opened the floodgates and the story broke across the world in early December. This has been a subject of interest for many British, European and American historians across a wide range of issues from the obligations of the free press in disseminating information, to the impact of the abdication on the domestic representation of the royal family.⁸⁶ As early as 1937, Fred Siebert contrasted the reticence of the British press with the avid reporting of the American papers.⁸⁷ More recently, Schwartzenbach compared the European and American reaction to the abdication, finding that modern American romantic ideals of love, marriage and divorce drawn from popular culture underpinned support for the marriage outside of Britain and Europe.⁸⁸

The existence of this broad comparative body of knowledge serves to highlight a gap in understandings of the Australian reception of news of the abdication. This is surely significant, as the King's inability to speak directly to the people meant that it was largely left to the Dominion press, themselves relying on cabled British and American accounts, to explain the issues at stake. Later biographers such as Donaldson have touched upon the status of reporting in other Dominions, such as the growing

⁸⁴ Piers Brendon and Phillip Whitehead, *The Windsors: a dynasty revealed* (London: Pimlico, 2000), p. 76.

⁸⁵ Windsor, *A king's story*, p. 315.

⁸⁶ For example, Diane Bennett, 'Public communication in crisis: a case study of the rhetorical dimensions of the abdication of Edward VIII', PhD thesis (Indiana University, 1987); Brendon and Whitehead, *The Windsors: a dynasty revealed*.

⁸⁷ Fred S. Siebert, 'The Press and the British Constitutional Crisis', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1/4 (1937), pp. 120-25, pp. 124-25.

⁸⁸ Schwartzenbach, 'Love, Marriage and Divorce.'

sense of outrage among British ex-patriate communities in America where reporting was less inhibited.⁸⁹ Some now-dated accounts have assumed that Australian journalism deferred to Britain's lead in suppressing the circulation. In 1965, Cecil Edwards, for example, identified a 'pall of silence' in the Dominion press regarding the relationship.⁹⁰ George Fairbanks' 1966 article speculated on Australia's position during the management of the abdication, finding a deliberate attempt by those in 'high places' to suppress the development of Australian public opinion.⁹¹ These views sit uncomfortably with what is known from more recent studies of Australian independence and self-interest in matters imperial at the time. Yet, despite the increased accessibility of digitised newspapers and government records, the existence of any corresponding press gag in Australia has remained unexplored until now.

In terms of scholarly interest, the 'pall of silence' also extends to the role of the Dominions in the abdication. In December 1936, Edward formally renounced the throne so as to be free to marry Wallis. The move was precipitated by Stanley Baldwin, the British prime minister, with the support of the Dominion prime ministers.⁹² The literature to date has tended to focus on the British context of political machinations before, during and after the event.⁹³ Although existing accounts agree that the role of the Dominion governments was a critical element in the sequence of events that led to the abdication, they pay only general attention to the development and significance of their

⁸⁹ For further discussion, see Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 227-32.

⁹⁰ Cecil Edwards, *Bruce of Melbourne: man of two worlds* (London: Heinemann, 1965), p. 250.

⁹¹ George Fairbanks, 'Australia and the abdication crisis, 1936', *Australian Outlook: Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 20/3 (1966), pp. 296-302. Fairbanks' research was limited by the exclusion of official archival sources.

⁹² Although the Irish Free State held Dominion status at the time of the abdication, and was consulted as such on the issue by the British government, its political context and attitudes cannot usefully be compared with those of the former colonial white settler Dominions. Accordingly, this thesis does not discuss the position of Éamon de Valera in great detail in favour of that of Joseph Lyons, and to a lesser degree, the other imperial prime ministers. Although full analyses of the response in the other Dominions cannot be attempted here, an overview of the suite of Dominion responses is discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

⁹³ For example, Beaverbrook, *The abdication of King Edward VIII*; Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII*.

respective attitudes. For example, although he analyses a broad range of British sources, Bloch's considered discussion of the prime ministers' input runs to only a few pages and fails to address the domestic reception and management of the episode within each of the overseas Dominions.⁹⁴ But as mentioned earlier, the Statute of Westminster ruled that the Dominion prime ministers had a right to be consulted on equal terms on any change in the royal succession, style or title on an equivalent basis to that of the British government. This is a significant and, in the case of Australia, largely unexplored element of proceedings deserving of further attention.

As will be explained in chapters 4, 5 and 6, the prime ministers' responsibility came into play in the weeks prior to the abdication, when Baldwin secretly requested their advice in support of his proposal to refuse to consider the passing of new legislation enabling the King to marry Wallis morganatically; an alliance where she would assume neither his rank nor status.⁹⁵ By agreeing to request the Dominion prime ministers' advice, and failing to avail himself of the many opportunities to put forward his case for the marriage, morganatic or otherwise, and garner popular support, the King passively sealed his own fate. By agreeing to an official course of action, he was bound to accept the advice of his government. However, if he rejected this advice, the government would be forced to resign, possibly creating a constitutional upheaval of unprecedented magnitude. This seemed to centre on fears that politician Winston Churchill, Edward's most vocal supporter in Britain, would seize the chance to form a

⁹⁴ Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII*, pp. 151-53, 165-66.

⁹⁵ This entailed a marriage whereby although the King's wife would be resident in Buckingham Palace she would not be afforded the status of Queen. Legislation would be passed to amend the Act of Settlement so as to bar the issue of the marriage from the succession to the throne. It would be a necessary act of the suggested arrangement that the Governments would undertake to acquiesce in these conditions and would be responsible for any legislation necessary to put it into effect.

rival 'King's Party', the implications of which would surely influence the existing political stance on potential war in Europe.⁹⁶

The social and political impact may also have soon been felt within the Dominions, at that time asserting their own independence under the Crown. In any case, it soon seemed to transpire that Edward had little support therein. In the case of Australia, the United Australia Party prime minister Joseph Lyons quickly responded that there would be 'widespread condemnation' of such a marriage despite the King's popularity.⁹⁷ Implying consensus, he later affirmed that 'the clear opinion of my government the Commonwealth Parliament and Australian people is unfavourable to such a marriage.'⁹⁸ Not all of the responses were as emphatic. Bloch argues that the opportunistic Baldwin was able to collate and misrepresent the Dominion responses as part of a strategy to remove the King from the throne.⁹⁹ And so abdication became the King's only option.

This historical episode illustrated as never before the inner conflict between the monarch as a duty-bound symbol of a time-honoured institution, and as an individual with human aspirations living in the modern world. It also highlighted the potential for constitutional danger when the King overstepped the long-observed parameters in his relationship with the government. For people living across the Empire, the episode revealed a new and not wholly agreeable view of the fallibility of the monarch. In the end, the much-anticipated Coronation proceeded as planned, albeit with a replacement monarch, Edward's brother, the less glamorous King George VI. The exiled Duke and Duchess of Windsor retreated to France and a nomadic existence on the Society circuit.

⁹⁶ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 305.

⁹⁷ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Baldwin from Lyons, [?]29 November 1936 [elsewhere dated 1 December 1936].

⁹⁸ NAA, CP4/10, 2. Telegram to King's Private Secretary from Lyons, 5 December 1936.

⁹⁹ Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII*, p. 153.

Australia and the abdication

Until now, the full story of the development of Australia's position has remained unclear. Little of the manoeuvring described above was publicly known in the immediate aftermath of the abdication, as most of the previously restricted British government-related archival material held by the National Archives at Kew (TNA) was not made fully available for public access until 2003.¹⁰⁰ As such, even at a distance of thirteen years from then, research into this event could be described as still in its infancy. Admittedly, the British sources have in the time since been extensively mined for information given the intense and continuous public interest in the couple. So much so, that in one remarkable case evidence was amateurishly invented in what can only be a marker of how emotive and controversial the lives of Edward and Wallis remain. Among other dubious claims concerning aspects of inter-war history, British author Martin Allen's 'revelation' of material supposedly confirming the communication of secret intelligence to Hitler by the Duke of Windsor held within the TNA collections was found in 2008 to be based on a letter forged by the author and planted, along with 28 others, within the original files.¹⁰¹

More fortuitously, major significant British scholarship has also emerged during this time, the most important being the 2004 work by Susan Williams. In a substantial reinterpretation of the abdication using a range of social-historical archives, Williams concludes that Baldwin misjudged a large body of working-class support for the King in Britain. She also convincingly demonstrates the differences and tensions implicit in the cabled messages from the Dominions in response to requests for advice from London.¹⁰² Similarly, Frank Mort's 2013 study repositions the event as symptomatic of wider social

¹⁰⁰ Prior to this, parts of the collection were made available to researchers upon application.

¹⁰¹ Paul Lewis, 'The 29 fakes behind a rewriting of history', The Guardian website <<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/may/05/nationalarchives.secondworldwar>>, accessed 5 January 2016.

¹⁰² Williams, *The People's King*, p. 130.

anxieties concerning sexual morals and the domestic character of the 1930s.¹⁰³ While these works do not rely on Australian sources, they nonetheless demonstrate some of the possibilities of this area of social history, and confirm the assumption that there might be more to the matter than has recently met the historical eye.

Considerable new information was also added to the public record in Australia in 2003, when the NAA released the corresponding set of Australian government records from 1936, following advice from the British High Commission on behalf of the British Government that information relating to the abdication was ‘no longer sensitive.’¹⁰⁴ Despite this, the episode has never attracted the same degree of scrutiny from a local perspective. The context of Lyons’ reasoning and the nature of public opinion have never been fully investigated. In a 1949 biography of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, Baldwin is quoted as placing particular emphasis on the Australian prime minister’s input in the years after Lyons’ death. ‘The decisive factor’, he reportedly stated, ‘was the uncompromising stand of the Dominion premiers and especially of the Prime Minister of Australia.’¹⁰⁵ This retrospective emphasis on the Dominions’ common attitude and Lyons’ opposition was uncritically reiterated in each of the major biographical works.¹⁰⁶ Donaldson, for example, unreservedly accepts the ‘official’ perspective, remarking that ‘the strongest reply came from Lyons’ and that:

Baldwin’s view was shared by the cabinet, by the leaders and almost all members of all political parties, by everyone except a handful of MPs, by the vast majority of his countrymen and of the populations of the Dominions.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Frank Mort, ‘Love in a Cold Climate: Letters, Public Opinion and Monarchy in the 1936 Abdication Crisis’, *Twentieth century British History*, 25/1 (2013), pp. 1-33, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Email to author from Amanda Hardie, Reference Officer, National Reference Service, NAA, 23 February 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in John Gilbert Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), p. 404.

¹⁰⁶ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 263.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

Ziegler was similarly unequivocal, describing the Dominion responses as ‘predictable’ and that the Australians ‘were the most decided.’¹⁰⁸ Bogdanor has also agreed that Lyons’ response was, somehow, consistent with those of the other Dominions, in that their ‘common political instincts and habits of mind led [them]...to act together.’¹⁰⁹ However, as more recently shown by Williams’ findings, grassroots public opinion is not always at one with that of the ruling decision-makers. The factors that contributed to Australia’s official response to the abdication remain uncompromisingly obscure, although there is some related context available for the public response elsewhere in at least one other Dominion. Beadle’s 1969 Canadian study remains the only in-depth examination of the reception of the abdication outside of Britain.¹¹⁰ Here, in an interesting contrast to Williams’ discovery of British popular support for the King’s predicament, he concludes that the majority of Canadians condemned Edward’s choice on moral grounds, pointing to the prevalent Puritan and Roman Catholic morality of the time.¹¹¹ Significantly, this indicates that differences in local responses to the abdication existed within the coalition of Dominions. As a paradox between private happiness and public duty, it is not difficult to imagine that the abdication caused Australians to review existing convictions concerning the royals and the institution they symbolised.

In any case, no biographer or historian, Australian or otherwise, has satisfactorily explained the background to Lyons’ resolute claim that Australians would not support the King’s marriage, nor offered a satisfactory explanation for why the popular regard for Edward that supposedly existed in 1920 was no longer in evidence. In 1979, J. Bryan III and Charles J.V. Murphy suggested that Lyons, a Roman Catholic,

¹⁰⁸ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 305.

¹⁰⁹ Bogdanor, *The monarchy and the constitution*, p. 248.

¹¹⁰ Beadle, ‘Canada and the Abdication of Edward VIII.’ This is drawn from the author’s research for ‘The Canadian press reaction to the abdication of Edward VIII’, PhD thesis (University of Syracuse, 1966).

¹¹¹ Beadle, ‘Canada and the Abdication of Edward VIII’, p. 38.

was motivated by religious prejudice, claiming ‘he had no sympathy for divorce as an institution, or divorced people ... he had only scorn for both the monarchy and its most conspicuous ornament.’¹¹² Lyons’ biographers have only partially analysed his position. Anne Henderson, for example, argued that the prime minister ‘correctly pinpointed the moral judgement of many ordinary citizens about a twice-divorced woman.’¹¹³ Kate White offers that Australians opposed the marriage ‘because she was a commoner.’¹¹⁴ What then, are we to make of Fairbanks’ assertion of fifty years ago that there was a ‘remarkable outpouring of sentiment in favour of King Edward’ as the abdication became public knowledge?¹¹⁵

A final point of interest is the fervent Empire-wide propaganda that assisted in the promotion of the new King, George VI, between the abdication and his Coronation of May 1937. Bloch has convincingly demonstrated how both the royal family and the Establishment attempted to subdue Edward’s public visibility in the aftermath of the abdication due to fears that he would embark on an independent political career that might pose a threat to his brother’s Kingship.¹¹⁶ Here the British press and its networks played a role in attempting to smooth the transfer of public affection from one monarch to the next. In contrast to the unsuitable Wallis, from whom rightful royal status was withheld, the new Queen Elizabeth was promoted as a model of domesticity, and importantly, of steadfast assistance to her husband. David Sinclair contends that this process was eased by the symbolic nature of the occupant of the throne, where the individuality of that person was of little importance. This, he argues, explains why ‘the

¹¹² Bryan and Murphy, *The Windsor story*, p. 238.

¹¹³ Anne Henderson, *Joseph Lyons: the people’s prime minister* (Sydney, N.S.W.: NewSouth, 2011), p. 385.

¹¹⁴ Kate White and Frank Moorhouse, *Joseph Lyons* (Melbourne, Vic.: Black Inc, 2000), p. 163.

¹¹⁵ Fairbanks, ‘Australia and the abdication crisis, 1936’, p. 300.

¹¹⁶ Michael Bloch, *The secret file of the Duke of Windsor* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

once-popular Edward was forgotten so quickly after the abdication and the loyalty and affection he had commanded were transferred immediately to his successor.¹¹⁷

The extent to which this situation might also apply to the Dominions remains uncertain, although many of the themes discussed likely resonate widely. Beadle's work on the Canadian press, for example, indicates that journalists in that Dominion were quick to follow Britain's lead, with little public dissent.¹¹⁸ What, then, was the attitude of the Australian press, and what was its lasting effect? What is clear is that an exploration of changing public perceptions of a member of the royal family suddenly *persona non grata* may offer fresh insights into Australian inter-war expectations of morality, duty and modernity in a monarch, and how this related to their public office.

Australians and the monarchy

Beyond the body of literature specifically examining Edward's life and comparative examples of early twentieth century royal tours, there is a small but growing group of Australian historians whose work engages with the popular experience of constitutional monarchy. This has not always been so, and in fact the tide has only recently begun to turn. In 2008, for example, McKenna echoed Connors' earlier observation concerning this neglected area of social history, remarking that it had been regarded with 'condescension and bemusement, more pilloried than understood.' This attitude, he concluded, served to 'leave a vast terrain of Australian cultural history unexplored.'¹¹⁹ This is not to deny that the popular experience of imperialism has not featured, albeit obliquely, in the large body of mid to late twentieth century Australian historiography concerned with republicanism or the legal constitutional role of the monarchy in all its

¹¹⁷ David Sinclair, *Two Georges: the making of the modern monarchy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), p. 7.

¹¹⁸ Beadle, 'Canada and the Abdication of Edward VIII', p. 40.

¹¹⁹ McKenna, 'Monarchy: from reverence to indifference', p. 264.

guises. Certainly, the idea of a colonial and post-Federation Australia completely subservient to the British ideal has been largely picked apart from the 1960s onward.¹²⁰ There was, for example, a significant surge of republican sentiment during Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, and there were continuing tensions in matters of defence, trade, finance and immigration policy during the early decades of the twentieth century. Historians' attention was also diverted by the extraordinary interactions between the then prime minister Gough Whitlam and the Governor-General John Kerr in 1975, which provoked a number of both scholarly and combative works musing on many strategic or political aspects of the monarchy's role in Australia.¹²¹ Later prime ministers devoted varying degrees of attention to the topic, culminating in the referendum of 1999.

However, as McKenna points out, discussion has been limited by the way critics have viewed the monarchy as a foreign entity in Australia, and perceived that its presence implied dependence and limited nationalist aspirations.¹²² Although evidently a critical part of Australia's long relationship with the monarchy, less frequently has the spotlight in the republican and nationalist debate been directed towards the significance of the monarchy's popular expression. Furthermore, as Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward observed in 2008, much historical attention of the later twentieth century was diverted towards narratives examining post-colonial tensions distinct from and in opposition to imperialism, most notably the theme of frontier conflict.¹²³

¹²⁰ For example, Humphrey McQueen, *A new Britannia: an argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1970). For further discussion, see Mark McKenna, *The captive republic: a history of republicanism in Australia 1788-1996* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹²¹ For example, Donald Horne, *Power from the people: a new Australian constitution?* (Melbourne, Vic.: Victorian Fabian Society, 1977); A. J. Grassby, *The Australian republic* (Leichhardt, N.S.W.: Pluto Press Australia, 1993).

¹²² McKenna, 'Monarchy: from reverence to indifference', p. 264.

¹²³ Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward, 'Epilogue: After Empire', in Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds.), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 389-402, p. 401.

Although underpinned by the political, foreign policy, defence and economic imperatives as played out in the theatre of Empire, this thesis is mostly concerned with the popular perception of monarchy in Australia that in many ways bolstered continued support for imperialism in an independent nation. I seek to further explore Beaumont's argument that at the time of the First World War 'imperial loyalty was anchored in a cultural and emotional identification with the United Kingdom which transcended any rational calculations of strategic pragmatism' by explicitly identifying the monarch as the symbolic pinnacle of this emotional connection.¹²⁴ If we consider that loyalty to the monarch has played a central role in the formation of Australian identity, it becomes evident that their widespread presence is embedded in many facets of Australian life. Curiously, however, this has at few points been subject to critique. For example, Justice Michael Kirby remarked in 1993 that 'for more than 200 years Australians have had a King or Queen. It has become, and is, part of our society's very nature.'¹²⁵ While uncritical perceptions such as this have raised the ire of republican commentators in the past, this study argues that the popular dimension of this supposedly 'natural' relationship with the royals is a significant aspect of Australia's experience of constitutional monarchy.

There are a small but significant number of British and American studies that provide useful historical context for the growth and function of popular monarchism.¹²⁶ Walter Bagehot's evocative argument of 1867 remains highly relevant to contemporary studies. He writes that the combination of a human figurehead with the forces of religion, pageantry and morality ensured the continued place of the monarch on the throne. A royal family, he argues, 'sweetens politics by the seasoned addition of nice

¹²⁴ Beaumont, "Unitedly we have fought", p. 400.

¹²⁵ Michael Kirby, 'Reflections on Constitutional Monarchy', in Wayne Hudson and David Carter (eds.), *The Republicanism debate* (Kensington, N.S.W.: New South Wales University Press, 1993), pp. 61-76, p. 62.

¹²⁶ For example, T. O. Lloyd, *The British Empire 1558-1983* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

and pretty events.’¹²⁷ More recently in 1988, Tom Nairn cautioned against underestimating the social significance of such innocuous public appearances, asserting that popular monarchism has ‘an apparently inexhaustible electric charge.’¹²⁸ Among the most prominent and influential historians on matters of royalty are Vernon Bogdanor and David Cannadine.¹²⁹ Cannadine’s research is particularly expansive and provides a guiding hand throughout this thesis, and although he does not specifically discuss Australia’s popular experience of monarchy, his argument for so-called royal traditions as modern twentieth century inventions is of enormous relevance to any examination of royal public lives and tours.¹³⁰

Also useful here is the theoretical context established by works seeking to provide an insight into a particular royal individual. Briefly, these explore the critical contention that the royal family exerts a symbolic power, most commonly identified with Bagehot’s observation that ‘its mystery is its life. We must not let daylight in upon magic.’¹³¹ In her work examining Queen Elizabeth II, Ilse Hayden, for example, discusses the relevant idea that the royal family function as the focus of the projected desires of the onlookers. Hayden examines the dual persona of the monarch, in combining both an extraordinary royal persona and that of an ordinary person.¹³² Also of relevance is Nairn’s argument that perceptions of ordinariness ‘somehow underwrites the collective soul and reinforces a feeling of community.’¹³³ Nairn alludes to the broad and re-inventive appeal of the institution of monarchy, and its capacity to ‘offer itself in

¹²⁷ Walter Bagehot, *The English constitution* (London: C.A.Watts, 1976 reprint), p. 86.

¹²⁸ Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted glass: Britain and its monarchy* (London: Radius, 1988), p. 53.

¹²⁹ For example, Bogdanor, *The monarchy and the constitution*. David Cannadine and S. R. F. Price, *Rituals of royalty: power and ceremonial in traditional societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹³⁰ David Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance, and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition,’ c. 1820-1977’, in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 104-64.

¹³¹ Bagehot, *The English constitution*, p. 100.

¹³² Ilse Hayden, *Symbol and privilege: the ritual context of British royalty* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), p. 71.

¹³³ Nairn, *The Enchanted glass*, p. 22.

suitably varying modes to its believers.’¹³⁴ These analyses can be usefully considered within a study of Edward’s inter-war Australian public life.

British and American studies, however, have inevitable limitations. Undoubtedly the development of similar sentiment in an Australian context cannot be explained solely by the Anglo-Celtic cultural background characteristic of most of the population during the early decades of the twentieth century. While these sources provide valuable context, perceptions of the monarchy in Australia, and indeed the other Commonwealth Dominions, present a different set of social conditions and so comparisons or projections are not straightforward.

There is however a small body of Australian literature that recognises the importance of the British monarchy to this country’s historical imaginings. This was initially established during the 1980s and is currently experiencing a significant resurgence. In 1986, Peter Spearritt, for example, was one of the first historians to directly address popular monarchism, in this case as directed towards Queen Elizabeth II, as an area of historical study.¹³⁵ Spearritt’s work also demonstrates the value of a wide range of surviving contemporary, everyday visual and material culture as historical sources.¹³⁶ Connors also found that the scope of the Queen’s royal tour of 1954, and its participants, strongly reflected the cultural context from which it was generated.¹³⁷ The role of the monarch has also been explored within the scholarly discipline of law with a focus on its changing role within legal and political institutions.¹³⁸ However, these publications focus almost exclusively on Australian expressions of popular monarchism

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

¹³⁵ Peter Spearritt, ‘Royal Progress: the Queen and Her Australian Subjects’, *Australian Cultural History*, 5 (1986), pp. 138-57.

¹³⁶ For further discussion, see Annette Shiell et al., *Australians and the Monarchy* (Melbourne, Vic.: Ideas for Australia Program and the National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1993); Spearritt et al., *Out of empire: the British dominion of Australia*.

¹³⁷ Connors, ‘The Glittering Thread’, p. 345; Spearritt et al., *Out of empire: the British dominion of Australia*.

¹³⁸ Kirby, ‘Reflections on Constitutional Monarchy’, pp. 61-76.

as associated with Queen Elizabeth II during the latter half of the twentieth century, with lesser attention paid to Edward, Prince of Wales during the inter-war years.

This scholarly interest is ongoing. At present, a distinct resurgence can be discerned in studies re-examining aspects of monarchical symbolism in former imperial colonies.¹³⁹ For example, Philip Murphy's 2013 book *Monarchy and the End of Empire* provides one of the first intensive examinations of the changing role of the monarch and the overseas realms.¹⁴⁰ In 2015, Luke Mansillo examined the correlation between the activities of the royal family from the 1990s and fluctuations of Australian support for the institution, noting 'significant gains' from the turn of the twenty-first century.¹⁴¹ Also in 2015, Hill's *Australians and the Monarchy* became the first full-length monograph on the local historical context, although his conclusion that the 'magic' the royals exerted over Australia was composed of the 'familiarity and comfort that comes from continuity' and the thrill of pageantry and 'in recent times the new breed of royal "celebrity"' still left much of the attraction unexplained.¹⁴² This context may be more usefully considered in light of aspects of the broader work of authors such as Beadle, Nairn or Connors that interrogate the aspirations, ideals and press-created facades that coalesce around popular understandings of the monarchy. This thesis' objective is to partially reveal aspects of McKenna's unexplored terrain of cultural history and contribute to this vibrant field of scholarly analysis.

¹³⁹ For example, Schreuder and Ward, *Australia's Empire*; Murphy, *Monarchy and the end of empire*; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: how the British saw their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2002).

¹⁴⁰ Murphy, *Monarchy and the end of empire*.

¹⁴¹ Luke Mansillo, 'Loyal to the Crown: Shifting Australian Public Opinion on the Monarchy', a paper prepared for delivery at the *Annual Meeting of the Political Studies Association*, Sheffield, March 30 – April 1 2015, p. 2.

¹⁴² Hill, *Australians and the monarchy*, p. 405-06.

Australia and the Empire

In contrast to the relatively neglected topic of the monarchy in Australia, there is a wide body of literature that engages with Australia's relationship with Britain as part of the Empire, and explores some of the tensions therein as Australia grew into an independent nation following Federation in 1901. This provides essential context to the widely felt Australian affection for the monarchy despite its increasingly anachronistic position in strategic matters as Australia sought to define its place within the Empire during the first half of the twentieth century. As Bernard Attard and Carl Bridge noted in 2000, although Australia made the journey from colonial to self-governing status in 1901, Federation served to further complicate the ambiguity of its future strategic direction within the Empire.¹⁴³ McKenna suggests that 'imperialism, for all its gaudy symbolism, provided the vision, the grandeur and the glorious past that Australians were not able to find in their own beginnings.'¹⁴⁴ The compelling evidence for continuing British patriotic cultural and educational prerogatives of the immediate post-Federation era has also been well explored by social historians.¹⁴⁵ Gavin Souter, for example, has identified the establishment of Empire Day in 1905 as a key point during the immediate post-Federation period that demonstrates renewed middle-class support for imperialism as means of promoting cohesion within the Empire.¹⁴⁶

The co-existence of Australia's increasingly powerful assertion of independence and ongoing connection to British culture, education, and legislative and political

¹⁴³ Bernard Attard and Carl Bridge (eds.), *Between empire and nation: Australia's external relations from Federation to the Second World War* (Kew, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2000).

¹⁴⁴ McKenna, *The captive republic*, p. 206.

¹⁴⁵ For further discussion, see Bob Bessant, 'The Experience of Patriotism and Propaganda for Children in Australian Elementary Schools before the Great War', *Paedagogica historica*, 31/1 (1995), pp. 83-102; William M. Kuhn, *Democratic Royalism: The Transformation of the British Monarchy, 1861-1914* (UK: Palgrave, 1996), pp. 57-81.

¹⁴⁶ Gavin Souter, *Lion and kangaroo: the initiation of Australia, 1901-1919* (Sydney, N.S.W.; London: Collins, 1976), p. 114.

frameworks in the following decades has been thoroughly scrutinised by generations of historians. The cultural imperatives that prompted 416,809 Anzacs to join their British allies at war between 1914 and 1918 have provided the focus for many publications.¹⁴⁷ Beaumont, for example, points to the revised identities emerging from the First World War as both validating imperial loyalty and allowing the federal government to establish and maintain the ideology as ‘a means of legitimating their hold on power’ for decades after. Only afterwards, she writes, would it emerge that the Empire was in fact weakened by the war and the assertions of Britain and France during the negotiations for peace manifestly deficient.¹⁴⁸ Schreuder and Ward also identify the inter-war period as typified by complexity, describing ‘a hybrid ideology, one that drew from both a tenacious race identity of Britishness, together with an increasingly assertive sense of material self-interest, and an environmental sense of place.’¹⁴⁹ Even while Australia’s international relations remained inseparable from those of the Empire, the nation’s politicians, public servants and soldiers sought to pursue Australian goals within a British world. Kosmas Tsokhas has outlined how the Australian government of the time negotiated fiercely for Australia’s political interests, foreign policy and defence, but in other respects were ‘cooperative, mutual and relatively conflict-free’ in their dealings with Britain.¹⁵⁰

Although existing studies have little to say about the position of the monarch in nationalistic or patriotic imagination, in many ways the symbolism of the Crown was able to co-exist with the new nation’s affirmation of egalitarian independence. Several

¹⁴⁷ For example, E. M. Andrews, *The Anzac illusion: Anglo-Australian relations during World War I* (Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Michael McKernan, *The Australian people and the Great War* (West Melbourne, Vic.: Nelson, 1980); Bill Gammage, *The broken years: Australian soldiers in the Great War* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2010).

¹⁴⁸ Beaumont, “‘Unitedly we have fought’”, p. 399.

¹⁴⁹ Schreuder and Ward, ‘Introduction’, in *Australia’s Empire*, p. 10-11.

¹⁵⁰ Kosmas Tsokhas, *Making a nation state: cultural identity, economic nationalism and sexuality in Australian history* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001), p. 2.

authors have considered how these two responses can be reconciled. John Hirst, for example, suggests that in fact the buoyancy of sentiment reflects the degree to which self-interest was being served.¹⁵¹ Neville Meaney also identifies two distinct Australian views of the connection to Britain; firstly one that perceived Britain as the ‘metropolitan superior’ at the heart of a network of colonial subordinates; and secondly the Empire as ‘a multi-polar structure, an alliance of British peoples in which all the white constituent elements were entitled to [equal] consideration and dignity.’¹⁵² Ward also points out that, although political aspirations of the time were viewed through this ‘sentimental prism of British race patriotism’, this in no way deflected Australia’s political pursuit of its own freedom, priorities and interests – and this remained the status quo until the early 1960s, when British strategic attention turned towards Europe rather than the Commonwealth.¹⁵³ Frank Bongiorno has also drawn attention to the cohesive power of the symbolism of the Crown, rather than royalty *per se*, in inter-war Australian political imagination. With a distant and benevolent monarch as its figurehead, the Crown was seen in some liberal quarters as an essential foundation for self-government, in turn representative of political independence within a common legislative framework.¹⁵⁴ As I will show, within this context, perceptions of Edward would ebb and flow in response to these political and social imperatives.

¹⁵¹ John Hirst, *Sense & nonsense in Australian history* (Melbourne, Vic.: Black Inc. Agenda, 2006), p. 250.

¹⁵² Neville Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian identity: The problem of nationalism in Australian history and historiography’, *Australian Historical Studies*, 32/116 (2001), pp. 76-90, p. 83.

¹⁵³ Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British embrace: the demise of the imperial ideal* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001), p. 9-10.

¹⁵⁴ Frank Bongiorno, ‘Commonwealthmen and Republicans: Dr. H.V. Evatt, the Monarchy and India’, *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 46/1 (2000), pp. 33-50, pp. 38-39.

Summary

This thesis charts the evolution of Edward's public life in Australia between approximately 1916 and 1936 by analysing changing Australian perceptions of his particular qualities or characteristics. My first objective is to address a gap in the historical record, as there is currently no study that engages with Edward's public life from an Australian perspective. The 1920 royal tour and 1936 abdication are significant and under-studied episodes bearing on broader understandings of the inter-war history of the monarchy in Australia. Their analysis is timely given the renewed scholarly interest in the social history of imperialism and royalty during the inter-war period. This is also an area of historical interest that can only gain fresh prominence as the present Queen ages and the future of the British monarchy is subject to further debate. The consequence of this detailed analysis of Edward's public life is an advanced understanding of the foundation for the deep inter-war attachment to the monarchy, which contributes fresh insights into the conflicted position of Australian's relations with Britain during the first half of the twentieth century.

In the following pages, I argue that between the First World War and his abdication, Edward both provided a focus for and reflected the projected cultural and social desires of Australians. He was seen to possess a series of appealing and aspirational masculine qualities: a symbol of the Crown, as an inspiration for peace, as a modern exemplar and as a member of the family. I find that these qualities were both deliberately and intuitively manufactured by both popular and official undertakings, such as government imperatives, the press and educational activities, as well as Edward's own prerogatives. Australian perceptions of the monarch's behaviour therein fall broadly into two halves; firstly, those that accentuated his personal humanity, often in masculine terms, and secondly, those that apparently demonstrated his dedication to

his duties. The balance of emphasis between these two halves – the man and the monarch – shifts from one extreme to the other within the timeframe discussed.

The thesis' findings further inform the historical context. I argue that the analysis of this conflict between private fulfilment and obligation to the state can be correlated with the resonance of the same debate within inter-war society of the time. The Prince's star shone the brightest in the immediate post-war era, when his modern and masculine qualities seemed to epitomise the hopes and fears of the young, and his reign promised an equitable and democratic imperial future. As he aged, Australian observers found this could not be sustained. To his discredit, his seemingly selfish and reckless behaviour called into question his qualities suitable for the Kingship, in a time of growing preoccupation over Australia's independence. When Edward overstepped the confines of his public persona by the act of seeming to insist on a relationship reportedly established on immoral foundations and seemingly contravening his pre-ordained 'duty' to the throne, he became morally undesirable as a leader. Along with the destruction of the Prince's attractive persona, came also a blow to Australia's own imperial identity. Although some lamented Edward's lost potential, Australian support was readily transferred to another man supposedly exhibiting the suite of prized qualities.

This thesis concludes that inter-war Australian political and popular affection for individual monarchs could variously enhance and come into conflict with ideals of nationhood and expectations of the symbolic institution of British monarchy. In Australia, the royals enjoyed an unusual disassociation from religious or class-based affiliations, meaning that the attractiveness of their individual characters flourished in the perceptions of onlookers. I demonstrate that, although support for the monarchy could be temporarily agitated by the behaviour of the incumbent, this affection was superficial. For Australians, the peace and longevity of the Crown as a governing entity,

took precedence. Although promoted as an individual personality, Edward ultimately fell below Australians' expectations for what a royal public life should entail. It is the personal qualities of the monarch that bind observers to the symbolism of the throne, but these are swiftly discarded if any moral aspect comes into question. Ultimately, for Australians of the inter-war period, the figure of the monarch was inescapably bound up in his or her inherited duty to ensuring the prosperity and survival of the monarchy.

Methodology

Taking as its starting point the contention that the royal tour and abdication were received in a distinctive manner reflecting local circumstances, and accepting that inter-war Australian social dynamics differed from their British antecedents, the methodology of this thesis is to establish and chart a set of qualities that reveal Edward's particular appeal in Australia. To do this, I analysed a representative range of responses to both the royal tour and the abdication from across the social and political spectrum, as revealed by transcripts and recordings, public addresses, private letters and diaries, press reports and other ephemera. In seeking to partially untangle the 'webs of significance' that underpin these responses, I adopt the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz' methodology of 'thick description'; that is, the extraction of meaning from layers of cultural commentary and interpretation.¹⁵⁵ This is guided by the principles of the socio-historical approach popularised by the British historian Edward Thompson that aimed to reveal the lives and preoccupations of ordinary people through viewing history as if 'from below.'¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ The use of this term in anthropology was introduced by the ethnographer Clifford Geertz in his essay 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture', in Clifford Geertz (ed.), *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ For further discussion, see Miles Taylor, 'The Beginnings of Modern British Social History?', *History Workshop Journal* 43 (1997), pp. 155-76.

The available source material is considerable. I found that greater access to selected metropolitan and regional newspapers digitised by the NLA within the last five years has exposed an enormous terrain of grassroots public accounts of both events, in fact more than I could ever have hoped to include.¹⁵⁷ The accessibility of unpublished official records and personal manuscripts to researchers has been improved following the establishment of national and state repositories and reading rooms from the 1980s onwards. As well as the availability of Australian government records and the private papers of relevant political and public figures associated with both the abdication and the royal tour held at the NLA and the NAA, I also accessed those of their British counterparts held at the TNA, and the Royal Archives (RA).¹⁵⁸ The majority of my data is drawn from these four sources. I also discovered relevant information in the collections of the Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales (MLSLNSW), the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), the Imperial War Museum (IWM), the National Museum of Australia (NMA), the John Oxley Library at the State Library of Queensland (JOLSLQ), the Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT), the State Library of South Australia (SLSA) and the Australian War Memorial (AWM). *Hansard*, the published record of Australian parliamentary debates and proceedings, was also hugely useful.

Knowing in some cases only limited information about the writers and producers of such a plethora of evidence, the ephemeral and fragmented nature of certain parts of my source material in some cases hampered my ability to come to grips with it. Taken individually, highly subjective perceptions in private letters, official records and press reports cannot alone provide a clear impression of the views of the public at large. This

¹⁵⁷ The core of the study is drawn from an examination of over 500 original sources comprising approximately 300 newspaper articles, approximately 200 official or published records, and approximately 100 expressions of private opinion.

¹⁵⁸ At the RA I was permitted to access only the royal tour related material as ‘those studying for postgraduate degrees are only permitted to see records in the Royal Archives up to the end of 1935.’ Letter to author from Pamela Clark, Senior Archivist, RA, 11 October 2013.

is further complicated by the overlapping and unquantifiable gendered, religious or class-based affiliations of the authors. However, we should not forget Thompson's well known lobster trap metaphor for these types of texts as 'curious literary creatures' that, when raised from the depths to break the 'bland surface' of historiography, offer a teeming supply of representative views.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, I found that when considered within a comparative swath of evidence, these sources allow for the identification of broad themes that provide fresh insight into Australian perceptions of the royals and the monarchy. I am reassured in this endeavour by Connors' advice that 'talking about the royal family shows how people organise ideas about privilege, nationality, morality and family.'¹⁶⁰

Outline

This thesis is structured in six chapters. Broadly, it falls into two halves corresponding to the high and low contours of Edward's public visibility in Australian perceptions. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 argue for the development of a series of four main qualities or roles ascribed to the Prince of Wales – imagining the young man as a symbol of the Crown, an inspiration for peace, a modern exemplar and as a member of the family – that emerged before the First World War and would reach their zenith during his royal tour of 1920. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 chart how perceptions of these same qualities changed throughout the later 1920s and during the series of events that led to Edward's abdication and the accession of a new monarch in 1936. The Conclusion considers changing perceptions and expectations of the inter-war role of the monarchy as played

¹⁵⁹ E. P. Thompson, 'The Crime of Anonymity, from Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England', in E. P. Thompson and Dorothy Thompson (eds.), *The essential E.P. Thompson* (New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton & Co., 2001), pp. 378-431, p. 380.

¹⁶⁰ Connors, 'The Glittering Thread', p. 18.

out in Edward's abbreviated but nonetheless significant public life in Australia. It is to this untold narrative that I now turn.

Chapter 1: The heir presumptive

He struck me as being very decent, shy & reserved & conscious of his position.

-Henry Gissing, 29 March 1916.¹

An examination of the beginnings of the changeable relationship between Edward and the people of Australia highlights the four main qualities that, for good or ill, would become synonymous with his Australian persona between 1916 and 1936. By exploring these, my objective is, in part, to address a gap in the historical understanding of Edward's public life, considering, as Schwartzbach has noted in the context of Britain, the abdication episode saw the interplay of not one but two love stories; that of Edward and Wallis, but also the love between the people and their King.² The development and nature of the latter relationship has received notably less coverage in existing historiography, and in the case of Australia remains almost unexplored. Taking up the notion that attitudes towards the royal family might reflect the projected desires of onlookers, we might ask: can aspects of Australian social history offer further insight into how the Prince's public persona was forged?

But research on this topic is complicated by the complexities imposed by the Crown's role as one of the last formal links Britain and the Dominions, and not least, as Nicholas Mansergh has observed, that 'the King should fulfil many roles.'³ Although many of these 'roles' resonated widely across the Dominions, I consider here whether these might be imagined in a localised Australian way. Accordingly, the major objective in this chapter is to establish a lens, via these specific roles, characteristics or qualities,

¹ MLNSLNSW, MSS 1845, Henry Ernest Gissing diary. Entry for 29 March 1916.

² Schwartzbach, 'Love, Marriage and Divorce', p. 151.

³ Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth affairs*, p. 40.

to be applied throughout this thesis to chart the rise and fall of Edward's persona following wartime until 1936. By gleaning from the secondary literature some sense of both the Prince's character, and the cultural context of Australia during this timeframe, we can more easily identify how the two interrelated during the earliest stages of his public life in this country, particularly from around 1916 when he emerged into Australian consciousness as the heir presumptive.

I will show how Australian perceptions of Edward's early public life, that is, from wartime to the eve of his arrival in Australia in 1920, coalesce within four broad categories, or distinct qualities that can be ascribed particularly to his Australian persona. These are, firstly, as a symbol of the Crown, secondly, as an inspiration for peace, thirdly, as a modern exemplar and finally as a member of the family. It is against this backdrop that we can better understand the popular response to the royal tour of 1920, to be discussed in later chapters.

A symbol of the Crown

Edward was not well known in Australia during the years before the First World War, partly due to his youth but largely attributable to the greater attention paid to his grandfather King Edward VII, and after 1910, his father King George V. *The Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times*, for example, explained to its readers that the Prince's mother, Queen Mary, had deliberately sought to keep him 'very much in the background' before he turned 18-years-old, meaning his character was not well known to the 'outside world.' As an adolescent, the promotion of the monarch's strategic role as symbolic figurehead for the Crown rested firmly with his father, as Queen Mary

apparently wished that ‘irresponsibility be delayed as long as possible.’⁴ Nevertheless, there are several points where Australians had cause to become acquainted with their future King, and these contributed, albeit in a modest way, to the shaping of his public person that would come into force by the end of the First World War. The earliest instance was through an initially restrained range of newspaper coverage. Edward’s investiture as the Prince of Wales in 1911, for example, attracted some reserved attention. The Brisbane *Telegraph* took the opportunity to provide an assessment of the 17-year-old, concluding that:

Without being particularly handsome, Prince Edward is finely built, well set up, and in his naval uniform looks every inch a British sailor. His hair is fair and his eyes blue, his expression often decidedly serious and very determined. From babyhood he has always been the picture of health, a sturdy lad untroubled so far by any serious illness and possessed of unbounded vitality and keenness for both work and pleasure.⁵ **Image 1**

However, the most significant pre-war point of connection between Australians and their future King, and the one most transparently formalised, was via the education system. Some links can be drawn between Australian perceptions of the royal family as exemplary role models, and contemporary understandings of the monarch as the acme of the system of governance within the Dominions. Pre-war educational prerogatives favoured powerful symbolic imagery and rhetoric concerning the idealised role of the nuclear royal family as imperial rulers. In his 1997 study of the pre-war *School Paper*, a printed circular published for schoolchildren by the state education departments of the time, Bob Bessant identified the royal family as an essential ‘focus for ensuring the devotion and the loyalty of the young people’ towards the idea of a cohesive Empire populated by a uniformly devoted people willing to make sacrifices for the King.⁶ This

⁴ ‘THE PRINCE OF WALES AS HE IS’, *The Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times*, Albury, N.S.W., 11 December 1912, p. 3.

⁵ ‘Young Prince’s Career’, *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Qld., 15 July 1911, p. 12.

⁶ Bob Bessant, “‘We just got to look at her’”. Propaganda, royalty and young people: Victoria 1900-1954’, *Critical Studies in Education*, 38/2 (1997), pp. 35-59, p. 38.

was evidenced by photographs, drawings and text that extolled King George V's harmonious family as possessing a range of superior qualities suitable to govern a disparate people. A range of other imperial symbols such as maps, the Union Jack, as well as representations and panegyrics of the deeds of British-born 'heroes' also populated its pages. Later perceptions of Edward would draw strongly on the antecedents set by the *School Paper*, most notably what Bessant identified as the 'romantic' tone of 'adventure and heroic deeds, bravery, and kindness to the less privileged.'⁷

Several other authors have explored other monarchs' unusual and unique capacity to appeal to onlookers as an individual, both as a means to distance them from perceptions of their political or religious stance, and to encourage support from across the political spectrum.⁸ In fact, their essential appeal can be found in this multiplicity. Hayden, for example, defines this as a 'twoness', that is, the combination of the 'messiness of being a person' and a symbol perpetuating their role as democratic constitutional guardian.⁹ This perceived humanity enabled onlookers to understand the monarch as defending the wishes and interests of those in more humble positions, or as Alan Atkinson has described, playing a role as the 'guarantors of common liberties.'¹⁰

Others have further examined the seeming fluidity of constructional and personal roles, insofar as this was assisted by the media from the end of the nineteenth

⁷ Bessant, 'The Experience of Patriotism and Propaganda for Children in Australian Elementary Schools before the Great War', p. 91.

⁸ For further discussion, see Kinley Roby, *The King, the press and the people: a study of Edward VII* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1975); Matthew Glencross, *The State Visits of Edward VII: Reinventing Royal Diplomacy for the Twentieth Century* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁹ Hayden, *Symbol and privilege*, p. 10-11.

¹⁰ Alan Atkinson, 'Monarchy', in Graeme Davison, Stuart Macintyre, and John Hirst (eds.), *The Oxford companion to Australian history* (South Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 437-38, p. 437.

century.¹¹ As Paul Pickering has pointed out, the perceived leadership and personal qualities of the ‘good’ monarch have long been promoted in glowing terms by sections of the press, both during their reign and after death.¹² As demonstrated by the work of John Plunkett, the monarch as a domestic role model has its antecedents in the late nineteenth century, most notably Queen Victoria as the first ‘media monarch.’ In employing burgeoning photographic technology, Victoria actively involved observers in her family domesticity, an action that both enhanced and stripped away some of the ‘magic’ surrounding the doings of the royal family.¹³ By emphasising a role beyond that of aristocratic guardian of government, this paved the way for subsequent monarchs to occupy a less visible role in governance, and to strengthen their public persona as seen to be working for the betterment of the people.

As the *School Paper* shows, Australian educational imperatives of the pre-war era embraced this supposedly natural subdual of the monarch’s political stance and at the same time enhanced their position as social exemplars. Cooke has argued that the reign of the intractable King Edward VII was of only middling popular success, and it was not until the reign of Edward’s introverted father, King George V, that the monarch could be said to have achieved widespread public approval.¹⁴ In his autobiography, Edward agreed that his father had transformed the throne into a ‘model of traditional family values ... all the more genuine for its suspected but inconspicuous flaws.’¹⁵ It seems clear that their experience of King George V, perhaps more inclined to rigid domesticity than his father but an arch conservative nonetheless, paved the way for Australian’s expectations as to the public life of his son. All told, by the inter-war

¹¹ For example, Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: the British press and India, c. 1880-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Bennett, ‘Public communication in crisis.’

¹² Paul Pickering, ‘Confronting the good monarch: searching for a democratic case for the republic’, in Benjamin Jones and Mark McKenna (eds.), *Project republic: plans and arguments for a new Australia* (Australia: Black Inc., 2013), pp. 118-32, pp. 129-31.

¹³ John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: first media monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ Alistair Cooke, *Six men* (New York: Knopf, 1977), p. 49.

¹⁵ Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 279.

period, the royal family served as a personable façade for the remote and strategic function of the Crown as the apex of Empire governance and executive power.

By extension, respect for the figure of the monarch also equated to patriotic esteem for the nation. Of particular relevance here is Mansergh's suggestion that, for former colonial nations, the division between monarch and Crown can be indistinct, with the monarch almost held to be the source of governance. Within the Dominions, the appeal is 'direct and profound' he explains, and represents 'something personal and intelligible in the elaborate mechanism of government.'¹⁶ This resonated in parts of Australia. Speaking of the planned festivities for the King's Birthday public holiday, for example, one Brisbane journalist wrote in 1914 that the King's position above politics allowed the people to 'honour the constitutional system of their own creation ... their own genius for sound constitutional government.'¹⁷

Bessant suggests that post-Federation Australia's willingness to accept the royal family as a metaphor for the state arose as a result of the widespread if unspoken agreement between the government and the imperially orientated organisations and societies that patriotic loyalty should be propagated in the public interest.¹⁸ As Martin Crotty has also argued, the idea of nation rather than God became the most important paradigm in 1910s Australian society in response to emerging threats to the Empire.¹⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, growing German naval power challenged the British navy's northern spheres of influence, leaving the sparsely populated southern stretches of the Empire vulnerable to invasion from expansionist Asian countries, particularly Japan after the Russo-Japanese war of 1905.²⁰ In a 1909 issue, the *School*

¹⁶ Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth affairs*, p. 40.

¹⁷ 'KING'S BIRTHDAY', *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Qld., 2 June 1914, p. 2.

¹⁸ Bessant, "'We just got to look at her'", pp. 37-38.

¹⁹ Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian male: middle-class masculinity 1870-1920* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001), p. 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25. For further discussion, see Luke Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, Conflict and Compromise in the Late Nineteenth-Century* (Cambridge:

Paper fervently assured children that the symbolic might of the Crown could conquer all opposition. This power, the author wrote, could be:

great and far-reaching; and it can act as an almost indispensable rallying point among the varying interests of a great empire ... [it is] a real, vital, and effective part of the constitution by which the unity of the British Empire is largely preserved and strengthened, and its influence among the nations of the world maintained and enhanced.²¹

Although the young Prince was certainly by no means as publicly visible or revered as his father during the early 1910s, it is against this background and as a result of the efforts of educational propagandists of the early decades of the twentieth century that he emerged as a person of interest to Australians. He was one figure amid the widespread patriotic promotion of the royal family in Australia, notably maintained by the celebration of Empire Day from 1905. Considering, as anthropologist Victor Turner suggests, ‘a celebratory performance rejoices in the key values and virtues of the society that produces it’, these annual events offer some further insight into the place of the monarch and their immediate family in Australia’s cultural imagination.²²

Indisputably aligning with Cannadine’s identification of an ‘invented tradition’, this celebration of the unity of culture, language and kinship under a common allegiance to the Crown was held on Queen Victoria’s birthday, 24 May, and reflected many of the themes espoused by the *School Paper*. The day was observed in varying forms and with declining zeal within conservative schools and communities across Australia for over half a century until 1958. The height of its appeal coincided with the first decades of the twentieth century, at a time when a significant proportion of the population had either

Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 28-32, pp. 100-101; Daniel Spence, *Colonial Naval Culture and British Imperialism, 1922-1967* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), part III; Robert Hudson, *George V: Our Sailor King* (London: Collins, 1910), chapters 24-5.

²¹ Quoted in Bessant, ““We just got to look at her””, p. 40.

²² Victor Turner, *From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), p. 14.

been born in England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales or claimed descent therein.²³ Intended to appeal to both citizens and children, celebrations centred on schools and included the recitation of songs, parades, pageants and dances glorifying the power of Empire, followed by a half day holiday where sections of the community participated in public luncheons, speeches and church services.²⁴

Participants were supposed to feel proud and grateful for the Empire's continuing constitutional stability, prosperity and progress, and its ready military prowess was showcased by the recitation of soldierly rhetoric and displays of military-style drill performed by schoolchildren. The figure of Queen Victoria, as well as the reigning monarch and other members of the royal family, were central to proceedings. In Cooma, New South Wales, in 1910, for example, a series of lantern slides were shown demonstrating 'chief incidents' in the lives of the royal family.²⁵ In North Melbourne in 1912, decorative flags and bunting were interspersed with pictures of the King and Queen, and at Tunbridge, Tasmania, the local school received a framed photograph of the royal family as a memento of the day.²⁶ 'God Save the King' and 'God save the Prince of Wales' were among the patriotic songs sung, and children dressed as Queen Victoria, Britannia and adopted the national dress of other nations within the Empire. Attendees were sometimes given mass-produced keepsakes, including medallions depicting the King or Prince of Wales, as a souvenir of the day.

Image 2

Not everyone was as enthusiastic. In many ways, Empire Day seemed to complicate Australia's uncertainty over a post-Federation national identity rather than

²³ Over 500,000 Australians from a population of 4.3 million had been born in Britain in 1911. For further discussion, see Beaumont, "Unitedly we have fought", p. 400.

²⁴ For example, 'EMPIRE DAY', *Examiner*, Launceston, Tas., 29 May 1912, p. 6.

²⁵ 'Empire Day at Cooma', *The Monaro Mercury, and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser*, N.S.W., 27 May 1910, p. 2.

²⁶ 'EMPIRE DAY', *North Melbourne Courier and West Melbourne Advertiser*, Vic., 31 May 1912, p. 2; 'EMPIRE DAY', *Examiner*, Launceston, Tas., 29 May 1912, p. 6.

resolving it. When the proposal was first mooted in 1903, prime minister Edmund Barton was concerned that the focus on imperialism directly opposed ‘the leaders of democracy’, thought and liberty.²⁷ John Griffiths describes the celebration as initially something of a ‘political football’ that received varying lukewarm responses and provoked controversies across different states.²⁸ The event was opposed to varying degrees by Catholics, socialists, nationalists and the labour movement.²⁹ Maurice French argues that the strategic propagation of loyalist attitudes was a deliberate ploy on behalf of the subsequent government led by prime minister George Reid to avert socialism in an era of concern over wider imperial trade and defence.³⁰ A partial explanation for the hesitation over Empire Day may also lie in what McKenna has broadly identified as a ‘cultural and spiritual’ anxiety over Australia’s intrinsic worth without British-derived antecedents.³¹

However, what is also clear is that there was nevertheless an underlying body of support to the individual figure of the monarch that had little to do with strategic imperialism *per se*, as opposed by Australia’s left-wing or radical bodies. Griffiths, for example, shows how some Australians insisted that the day be abandoned in favour of the King’s Birthday holiday, in order to mark a continuing allegiance to the monarchy in general terms, rather than the federal constraints implied in Australia’s wider loyalty to the Empire.³² One writer to the *Argus* in 1910 suggested Empire Day simply be replaced in the calendar by the King’s Birthday public holiday, pointing out that many years had elapsed since Victoria’s reign, and that the celebrations could be ‘more

²⁷ Quoted in Maurice French, ‘One People, One Destiny – a question of loyalty: the origins of Empire Day in New South Wales 1900–1905’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 61 (1975), pp. 236-48, pp. 239-40.

²⁸ John Griffiths, *Imperial culture in Antipodean cities, 1880-1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 154.

²⁹ French, ‘One People, One Destiny’, p. 245-46.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 244-45.

³¹ McKenna, ‘Monarchy: from reverence to indifference’, p. 272.

³² Griffiths, *Imperial culture in Antipodean cities*, p. 155.

fittingly done on the King's birthday, for the King is the real personal head and symbol of the Empire.'³³ On the other hand, both business owners and citizens alike complained about the proliferation of meaningless public holidays on the commercial calendar. 'This sort of business is rather overdone in Australia', one man complained to his son in 1918.³⁴

Nevertheless, the centrality of the royal family in pre-war Empire Day proceedings was one element of the cultural context that encouraged the participation of many Australians in the First World War effort. As Beaumont points out, by 1914 a social environment had been created where 'the language of duty and imperial loyalty provided a means whereby many volunteers validated to themselves, and to their families, their decision to take an active part in the war.'³⁵ It was within this context of de-emphasising the formal observation of the monarch's constitutional responsibilities in favour of their individual merits that the Prince of Wales would come to prominence in public life. In a period where the importance of the royals' inherited role as defenders and protectors of the imperial ideal dominated, instead the attraction of Edward's personal qualities would flourish in wartime.

An inspiration for peace

Of his wartime experience, Edward would later remark that 'in those four years I found my manhood.'³⁶ The war would also powerfully influence the way his public life would be perceived by Australians, and from the conflict would emerge some of the most persistent narratives spun about his perceived attributes. For Australia's volunteers to

³³ Quoted in *ibid.*

³⁴ For example, MLSLNSW, MSS 1222, Hughes family correspondence. Letter to G. Hughes from T. Hughes, 25 June 1918.

³⁵ Beaumont, "'Unitedly we have fought'", p. 401.

³⁶ Bolitho, *King Edward VIII*, p. 62.

the expeditionary forces, the Empire was the defining motif championed in eloquent recruitment addresses across the country. Recruiters maintained that Australians were compelled to oppose the German objective of world domination and to loyally bolster British forces in support of ‘King and Country.’ Les Carlyon, for example, observes that at the onset of war ‘Australians saw themselves as transplanted Britons. A war against England was a war against them.’³⁷ Other motivations are more difficult to quantify, although many must also have been encouraged by the chance to travel while receiving generous pay. Generally Australia’s military involvement in the conflict met minimal resistance and only a small number of pacifists and far-left dissenters voiced serious objections.³⁸ The response was at first hugely enthusiastic, and over the duration of the war, 412,953 men voluntarily enlisted from a population of fewer than five million.³⁹ Peter Stanley has calculated that so many new volunteers came forward in 1915 that their numbers ‘doubled’ the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as established the previous year.⁴⁰

However, for some Australians the surge of loyal optimism soon proved misguided. Having tasted the reality of warfare, some rapidly voiced disillusionment with the patriotic and imperial propaganda that had pervaded their pre-war existence. Shortly after the beginning of the war, naval officer Frederick Riley reflected in a letter to his wife how:

When one is at home in the piping times of peace, with wife at side & children at knee, to read of war & heroic deeds gives just a needful splash of colour to deceive the monotony of slowly passing time; but to run up against it actually seems to smack & shatter the mind out of

³⁷ Les Carlyon, *Gallipoli* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Pan Macmillan, 2002), p. 106.

³⁸ Nick Dyrenfurth, *Mateship: a very Australian history* (Brunswick, Vic.: Scribe, 2015), p. 99.

³⁹ Figure reproduced in Beaumont, ““Unitedly we have fought””, p. 398.

⁴⁰ Peter Stanley, *Bad characters: sex, crime, mutiny, murder and the Australian Imperial Force* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Pier 9, 2010), p. 56.

semblance to itself.⁴¹

Such opinions were not often voiced publicly in favour of the rhetoric of upholding imperial loyalty to mobilise the expeditionary forces. Following reports of the Prince's attempts to contribute to the war effort on the Western Front, many Australian journalists took up a romantic view of his character. In January 1915, the *Maitland Daily Mercury* recorded approvingly that this 'English lad, scarce out of boyhood' was eager to do his duty and have a share in the inevitable victory.⁴² Although Edward was rarely in danger, this perception implicitly assumed that the King had chosen to honourably offer up the heir to the throne as a sacrifice for the greater imperial good, like so many thousands of Australian families. As the *Adelaide Register* commented in June 1916, the theme of gilded manhood setting off in defence of the Empire was as well suited to both prince and commoner:

The almost unexampled affliction and trial incidental to the war have brought the Sovereigns and their children into [an] intimate sympathetic relationship with all classes of the King's subjects: and the Prince of Wales ... is proving a worthy member of a noble House by the way in which he is sharing in the perils and responsibilities of the fierce and protracted conflict.⁴³

The Prince's presence in the theatre of war also garnered attention from Australian soldiers. This was, however, a view decidedly less clouded by the desire of some sections of the press to promote recruitment and a positive view of the frontlines as envisioned in the *War Precautions Act* of 1914. Edward's first encounter with the Anzacs, then recently evacuated from the scene of a sustained assault on Ottoman forces at the Gallipoli peninsula, was during a six-week tour of Egypt between March and May 1916. He was chaperoned by Colonel Archibald Murray and General William

⁴¹ MLSSLNSW, MSS 3035, Frederick Riley correspondence. Letter to his wife from Riley, 5 August 1914.

⁴² 'EDWARD THE WHITE PRINCE', *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, N.S.W., 23 January 1915, p. 10.

⁴³ 'The Prince of Wales', *The Register*, Adelaide, S.A., 23 June 1916, p. 4.

Birdwood, a British Army Officer who had commanded the AIF in Turkey. Here Edward inspected troops, hospitals and training facilities in Tel-el-Kabir, Ismailia, Khartoum and Serapeum, and reviewed the defence fortifications at the Suez Canal. This was the first time that large numbers of young Australians had encountered the 22-year-old Prince in person, and *vice versa*. This marked the beginnings of a jocular yet disparaging familiarity that would be sustained throughout the war.

The Prince's visit came at a highly significant moment in the history of the development of Australia's national identity. Nick Dyrenfurth, for example, points out how contemporary observers and politicians firmly identified the scenes of carnage throughout the Gallipoli campaign as the 'real birth' of the nation. Dyrenfurth explains how certain masculine and democratic qualities drawn from anti-authoritarian precedents from the colonial bush and goldfields 'transmuted into the classless Anzac fighting for his fellow nationals' on the First World War battlefields.⁴⁴ Beaumont also identifies 1916 as a critical moment in Australian discourse on imperial loyalty, coinciding as it did with further losses on the Western Front, slowing recruitment, and the growing debate at home over the obligations of citizenship and by extension military service. She points to 'an explosive mix of anxieties' including the loss of the fittest members of society, industrial disputes over potential military conscription, and the notion of soldiers being replaced in the workforce by female or Asian labour.⁴⁵ As will be discussed in greater detail in the following two chapters, Irish Australian apathy for imperialism also increased after 1916.

It is within this turbulent context that the mainstream Australian press' promotion of the figure of the Prince of Wales can be understood. Journalists

⁴⁴ Dyrenfurth, *Mateship*, p. 99. For further discussion, see Alistair Thomson, *ANZAC Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 53-80; Alistair Thomson, 'Embattled Manhood: Gender, Memory and the ANZAC Legend', in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (eds.), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 158-173.

⁴⁵ Beaumont, "'Unitedly we have fought'", p. 404.

entertained no doubt over what sort of a man their troops should expect to meet, insisting almost universally on the Prince's unpretentious nature as an asset beyond that of his role as his father's emissary, and a reassuring symbol of forthcoming peace and imperial unity. Although accounts of his generosity and desire to remain anonymous in public had been reproduced in Australian newspapers from early 1915, it was the Egypt visit that heralded the beginnings of domestic Australian perceptions of his personality as considerate and self-effacing.⁴⁶ Edward's comfortable stay at the British residency, tea with the Sultan and chauffeured tours of Cairo were barely mentioned. Instead, *The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times* assured its readers that 'he lives with the army in the simplest manner.'⁴⁷ The Prince was 'free from all "side"' and was simply 'doing his duty at the front in a quiet unobtrusive way' said one journalist.⁴⁸ Edward's apparent dislike of fuss continued to be a regular topic of interest.⁴⁹

This impression was only partially borne out in Egypt. Here the Prince's inexperience in public life became all too evident. Unobtrusiveness and self-effacement can all too easily be perceived as timidity or ennui. As one journalist later commented apologetically, 'the Prince's natural quietness, almost shyness of demeanour, was mistaken for kill-joy tendencies by the Australians.'⁵⁰ The men initially thought him 'supercilious' and 'superior', agreed another.⁵¹ Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that his appearance generated a stir in the Australian camps. Everywhere he went, mostly appearing unannounced, the Prince produced scenes of huge excitement with soldiers

⁴⁶ For example, 'OUR FUTURE KING', *Daily Mercury*, Mackay, Qld., 18 February 1915, p. 5.

⁴⁷ 'PRINCE OF WALES IN EGYPT', *The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times*, Tas., 1 April 1916, p. 3.

⁴⁸ 'The Prince of Wales', *The Richmond River Express and Casino Kyogle Advertiser*, N.S.W., 11 July 1916, p. 3.

⁴⁹ 'OTHERS AT HOME', *Queensland Figaro*, Brisbane, Qld., 1 July 1916, p. 19.

⁵⁰ 'SOCIETY AND OTHER SINNERS', *Call and WA Sportsman*, Perth, W.A., 11 July 1919, p. 1.

⁵¹ 'COUNTED OUT', *The Dalby Herald*, Dalby, Qld., 8 January 1926, p. 5.

rushing to line the road down which he was travelling.⁵² Wilfred Allsop noted in his diary that Edward's whereabouts 'could easily be followed by the intense cheering.'⁵³

Few wanted to miss out on the spectacle. Another soldier described the vision at Serapeum in a letter to his mother:

The Prince of Wales was flitting about in a launch, and it must have been a wonderful sight to see both banks of the Canal lined with thousands & thousands of troops. When he first came on the scene, the band played the National Anthem, and every soldier stood to attention, and they then gave three cheers.⁵⁴

Archie Barwick was also struck by the enthusiasm with which the Australians responded to a surprise visit:

[Y]ou ought to have seen some of the boys rushing out to have a look at him, some with no boots on some without tunics or hats & others with just their trousers on I warrant he thought we were a pretty rough looking crowd but the boys gave him a good welcome they crowded all round him trying to get snapshots with their cameras.⁵⁵

For at least some men who saw the Prince in Egypt, he assumed the role of imperial protector, capable of legitimising and thereby to some degree soothing the horrors of war. Morale-raising was, after all, his primary role. General Birdwood reportedly 'did all of the talking', and the Prince's duties were largely confined to expressing approval of the Australian facilities and sympathy to the wounded.⁵⁶ At times, he fulfilled this role effectively. During the visit to the No. 1 Australian Hospital, for example, one soldier recalled how he 'pleased everyone with his pleasant manner' and seemed eager to exchange at least a few words with every patient in the hospital.⁵⁷

⁵² 'PRINCE OF WALES IN EGYPT', *The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times*, Tas., 1 April 1916, p. 3.

⁵³ MLNSLNSW, MSS 1606, Wilfred Joseph Allan Allsop diary. Entry for 22 March 1916.

⁵⁴ MLNSLNSW, MSS 1159, Alan Fraser Fry correspondence. Letter to 'Mother' from Fry, 3 May 1916.

⁵⁵ MLNSLNSW, MSS 1493, Archie Barwick diary. Undated entry, likely March 1916.

⁵⁶ MLNSLNSW, MSS 1845. Entry for 29 March 1916.

⁵⁷ 'PRINCE OF WALES IN EGYPT', *The Capricornian*, Rockhampton, Qld., 27 May 1916, p. 40.

The visit also reportedly resonated with the Prince. Ziegler explains that he was at first deterred by the Anzacs' reputation for drunkenness and indiscipline, but was soon impressed by how 'they have fought so hard and are so keen', moved by a 'marvellous imperial spirit' for they weren't 'fighting for themselves or their own country either; only for the Empire.'⁵⁸ Ziegler goes so far as to identify the Egypt visit to the Australians as the first time Edward experienced the force of the 'adulation which was so often to be his lot' over the following decades.⁵⁹ He quotes a third-hand account as enthusing that the Anzacs 'looked at him so intently they forgot to salute ... Some of them gazed at him with tears rolling down their cheeks.'⁶⁰ This depth of emotion is not sustained by the archival sources consulted here, although one soldier did remark how Edward 'was good to look upon.'⁶¹

It seems Ziegler's estimation can be only partially correct. In contrast, the Australians' private letters and diaries reveal their attention to be of a most irreverent type. As I will discuss in the following pages, a sudden surge of imperial popular adulation of the Prince can be more precisely connected with the Allies' later overwhelming elation following victory and the end of the war. But in 1916, the cheers of the Anzacs were most likely in response to the prospect of a high-profile visitor to break the monotony of camp life. There was little else to write home about on the banks of the Canal. 'This place gets more monotonous every day' one private noted glumly.⁶² Not everyone approved of the fuss made of the visitors, and some expressed a feeling of egalitarian discomfort with the prospect of genuflecting to royalty. The Prince was well-received, Alan Fry thought, but:

there was no wild excitement or anything like that. The general opinion was that he was "not a bad looking little cove", and the thing

⁵⁸ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 70.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁶⁰ Mary Walrond, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 70.

⁶¹ MLSSLNSW, MSS 1845. Entry for 29 March 1916.

⁶² 'LETTERS FROM OUR BOYS', *Euroa Advertiser*, Vic., 19 May 1916, p. 3.

that struck one lad next to me most was the horse he was riding, for he turned round to me and said “Cripes! Cobber that’s some neddy “Walsee’s” riding isn’t it?” Royalty evidently didn’t trouble him much, and though some people may think it rather disrespectful, it was not meant in that way at all, as anyone who knows Australians, will know. It doesn’t matter a fig to most of them, if it is Royalty or anyone else inspecting them; they are not going to run mad with joy & make a great fuss just because someone rides through the Camp on a horse.⁶³

By all accounts, this ‘flash black horse’ made more of an impression than its rider; particularly for the members of the Light Horse who observed that the Prince experienced ‘some difficulty in managing his steed.’⁶⁴ Alfred Bray also admired the ‘beautiful black charger’ but felt the rush of troops crowding the visitors belied the fact that ‘nothing sensational’ was taking place.⁶⁵ Although the Australians were keen to indulge in an opportunity for celebration and a break in routine, they were also markedly uncomfortable with the notion that one man should be celebrated over another, heir to the throne or no. Charles Bean’s wartime observation that the Australians took ‘everything on its merits and nothing on authority’ would appear accurate.⁶⁶

For some, the desire to enjoy the visit of a ‘celebrity’ in their midst was merely a good excuse for high spirits. Accounts of the Egypt trip confirm how ownership of low-cost basic Kodak cameras allowed soldiers to capture their own mementos of the Prince’s journey through the camps, some of which would be sent home to their friends and families. ‘Cameras were much in evidence’, recalled Henry Gissing, and ‘at one time I counted twenty in a row, altogether there must have been forty, some fellows even on the roof, some lurking in the hedges, round corners, out of windows etc.

⁶³ MLSSLNSW, MSS 1159. Letter to ‘Mother’ from Fry, 24 April 1916.

⁶⁴ ‘COUNTED OUT’, *The Dalby Herald*, Dalby, Qld., 8 January 1926, p. 5.

⁶⁵ MLSSLNSW, MSS 1273, Alfred Bray war memoirs. Entry for 19 March 1916.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Renee Lockwood, ‘The Great War, the Soldier and the Holy ANZAC Spirit: Exploring the Sacred Mythology within the Australian ANZAC Tradition’, *Threads: University of Sydney Anthology* (2007), pp. 118-32, p. 123.

anywhere for a snap.’⁶⁷ Nurse Edith Thistlethwaite was sympathetic, describing how the ‘poor little chap had a bad time with the Cameras ... [everybody] who had a camera tried to get a Snap of him.’⁶⁸ These attempts to photograph him at every turn could be considered a forerunner of the intense attention the Prince would attract at every stage of his public life from then on in, but all the same do not go far enough to justify Ziegler’s estimation of Australian ‘adulation.’ **Image 3**

Celebrity aside, the physicality of the Prince was a particular disappointment. On top of their contempt for his poor riding skills, the Australians discovered to their surprise that their much-vaulted future King was simply an undistinguished-looking youth as could be found on any battlefield. Thistlethwaite was among the kinder observers, saying ‘the little Prince is very fair & good looking, but oh, such a boy.’⁶⁹ ‘He is only a mere boy, as tall as I am’, one soldier echoed in a tone of some astonishment to his father.⁷⁰ ‘He is just like a little girl’, Allan Brown similarly confided to his diary.⁷¹

The physical contrast between the slight, pale Prince and the brawny Australians, fit from their strenuous activities and deeply tanned from swimming in the canal must have been profoundly evident. Taking part in a review some weeks after Edward’s visit, George Faulkner observed his peers to be ‘the essence of manhood, men well trained & in the pink of condition, tanned with the monotonous heat of the desert.’⁷² It is likely that many also possessed a sense of maturity, a gravity beyond their years, at having survived the devastation of Gallipoli. Even so, the Australians may have been predisposed to criticism. As Crotty has pointed out, the oft-voiced paradox

⁶⁷ MLSLNSW, MSS 1845. Entry for 29 March 1916.

⁶⁸ MLSLNSW, MSS 7703, Edith Thistlethwaite correspondence. Letter to ‘Belle’ from Thistlethwaite, 3 April 1918.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Monty Jones, quoted in ‘ARMIDALE BOY IN EGYPT’, *The Tamworth Daily Observer*, N.S.W., 20 May 1916, p. 6.

⁷¹ MLSLNSW, MSS 17, Allan Dunn Brown diary. Undated entry.

⁷² MLSLNSW, MSS 1151, George Redmond Faulkner war diaries. Entry for 25 May 1916.

between the ‘manly Australian and the effeminate Englishman’, and the notion of ex-British stock thriving in favourable and uncorrupted climatic conditions was one firmly in evidence in Australian culture by the end of the nineteenth century.⁷³

It is therefore unsurprising, perhaps, that the Prince’s unimpressive physique was gleefully criticised. As Aubrey Wiltshire pointed out in the wake of his visit, ‘the prevailing opinion seems to be one of compassion in his insignificant stature.’⁷⁴ There were ‘great comments about the miserable appearance and physique of the poor little Prince of Wales. The feeling of our big men is one of compassion & pity!’⁷⁵ ‘He is rather effeminate looking’, another man wrote to his sister, ‘and seemed to be bashful, as he had very little to say.’⁷⁶ There was no end to the complaints. Still another despaired that ‘his walk is execrable & reminded me of an old man walking flat footed through a ploughed [sic] field.’⁷⁷ Despite his timid attempts to connect informally with Australians, the Prince’s first meeting with them seems to on the whole have fallen flat. The soldiers nevertheless relished the ceremony of the occasion, even if he did not. As Terence Garling noted in a letter to his parents, at times the Prince ‘seemed exceedingly bored.’⁷⁸

Australian perceptions did not improve much after the Anzacs were transferred to the Western Front. Here they encountered Edward several times in France and Belgium with his father and, at times, his brother Prince Albert, during a series of reviews intended to boost the tattered morale of the allied troops before they returned to the trenches. After the continued onslaught of death and destruction, those who had survived were thoroughly disillusioned with the discomfort of their situation and the

⁷³ Crotty, *Making the Australian male*, p. 20.

⁷⁴ MLSLNSW, MSS 3058, Aubrey Roy Liddon Wiltshire diaries. Entry for 19 March 1916.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Entry for 21 March 1916.

⁷⁶ ‘The Prince of Wales’, *Illawarra Mercury*, Wollongong, N.S.W., 12 May 1916, p. 7.

⁷⁷ MLSLNSW, MSS 1845. Entry for 29 March 1916.

⁷⁸ MLSLNSW, MSS 3432, Terence Ward Garling correspondence. Letter to ‘Father & Mother’ from Garling, 29 March 1916.

pre-war propaganda that had motivated them to join the allied war effort. Encounters with royalty continued to meet with cynicism. Some Australians were intolerant of unearned privileged status and viewed such events as nothing other than posturing. In his diary, Frank Weir quoted a censored piece of correspondence that complained about the time devoted to polishing equipment and practicing ceremonial routines in case of a visit from the King or Prince. ‘What do we want him for, he’s not been fighting & is only a man ... if the officers aren’t careful there will be a riot’ the unnamed soldier complained.⁷⁹ A.W. Ralston described for his father how an inspection by King George V entailed a march of up to 18 miles only to be left shivering in the cold for hours:

We were ordered to parade without coats and nearly froze. The King although he had a coat and a closed car looked half frozen and got through the job as quickly as possible.⁸⁰

The sight of the royals was at best uninspiring, the King being ‘not by any means a vital personality.’⁸¹ A sense of humour was not much in evidence and he failed to respond to Australian wayside banter as he passed through their ranks.⁸² John McRae was in the minority when he expressed in April 1917 how the sight of the King during a review of troops in England had moved him deeply and restored his conviction about his role in the conflict. ‘I now have absolute confidence in England’s King and our King, his sad, sweet smile and the tone of his deep voice impressed me greatly, and more than ever am I proud to think that I may in my small way help the King & his ministers in their “Crusade”’, he wrote in his diary.⁸³ Perceptions of the hapless Edward, however, remained consistent. Aubrey Wiltshire, for example, who had first

⁷⁹ MLSLNSW, MSS 1024, Frank Valentine Weir letter diary. Entry for 17 January 1919.

⁸⁰ MLSLNSW, MSS 1713, Ralston family correspondence. Letter to ‘Father’ from Ralston, 1 December 1917.

⁸¹ MLSLNSW, MSS 1887, Charles Harold Peters correspondence. Entry for 27 September 1916.

⁸² ‘War Notes’, *The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, N.S.W., 7 November 1916, p. 3.

⁸³ MLSLNSW, MSS 1031, John Duncan McRae diaries. Entry for 17 April 1917. Punctuation in original.

been underwhelmed by the Prince in Egypt, two years later still observed merely ‘a small pallid youth with a soft petulant face devoid of firmness.’⁸⁴ During the dismal winter of November 1916, another noted simply: ‘saw the Prince of Wales today; he looked aggravatingly clean.’⁸⁵ As the war drew towards its close, McRae’s estimation of the irreverent attitudes of his brothers in arms towards royalty is most likely closest to the truth. ‘Royalty is by no means universally popular amongst the boys and the value of tradition and of traditions’ emblems is not acknowledged generally by Australia’s sons’, he acknowledged in his diary.⁸⁶

However, Australian perceptions of the Prince of Wales would undergo a major transformation as victory became ever more certain and the end of the war approached. Pre-war Australian understandings of the division between monarch as an individual and monarch as the symbol of the Crown had become even more pronounced. Certainly, these two apparently incongruous roles have appeared to long co-exist comfortably in an Australian context. As Pickering writes, Australians can demonstrate a ‘long history of being able to differentiate institution and individual.’⁸⁷ The immediate post-war period enabled a surge of Australian willingness to approve of the personal characteristics of the royals, despite their uncertainty over Australia’s imperial strategy. This division is explicit in Bolitho’s 1937 observation that ‘the Australians were loyal after the war, but ... they had become apathetic about crowns, thrones and all this monarchy business.’⁸⁸

This gives us some basis to better understand changing Australian perceptions of the Prince. In the second half of 1918 he was attached to the Australian corps in Belgium before returning to England in early 1919, meaning the opportunities for

⁸⁴ MLNSLNSW, MSS 3058. Entry for 24 December 1918.

⁸⁵ MLNSLNSW, MSS 2931, William Henry Nicholson diaries. Entry for 14 November 1916.

⁸⁶ MLNSLNSW, MSS 1031. Entry for 17 April 1917.

⁸⁷ Pickering, ‘Confronting the good monarch’, p. 127.

⁸⁸ Bolitho, *King Edward VIII*, p. 126.

contact during this critical period of high collective emotion were dramatically increased. Aided by the press coverage of the unbridled victory celebrations, it should come as no surprise that the sentiment grew all the more persuasive as the British monarchy sought to distance themselves from their European cousins and promote their democratic appeal in the glow of victory over Germany.

It is at this point that the Prince of Wales' persona fully emerges as distinct from that of his father and he began to embody positive qualities of particular resonance to Australians. Several of Edward's biographers have made note of this but none have examined these qualities in detail. Bolitho claimed that the Prince liked the directness of 'the people of the new country, who dealt in neither compliments nor idle words.'⁸⁹ Donaldson later agreed that the Prince's personality was particularly in tune with 'a philosophy they [the Dominion soldiers] cherished deeply', but she also asserts that his presence counteracted in some way 'the sense of uncertainty and insecurity inevitably felt by the citizens of these aggressively young countries.'⁹⁰ This explanation falls far short of adequately explaining the dynamics within the relationship or allowing for the presence of distinct Australian cultural aspirations. More perceptively, Cooke points to the Prince as having successfully promulgated his only two assets: firstly the 'royal respectability' of his forebears, tempered by his own particular sense of 'fun and mischief', the latter having particular resonance with Australians.⁹¹ This seems most plausible, with this post-war shift in attitudes towards the Prince suggesting that Australian soldiers sought in their future leader the democratic qualities most prized amongst themselves.

Certainly, the evidence for the genuine and ever-growing appeal of the Prince's down-to-earth qualities with ordinary people in the immediate post-war period is

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

⁹⁰ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 80.

⁹¹ Cooke, *Six men*, p. 48.

persuasive. The elation of victory promoted a surge of support for the Empire with the Prince as its figurehead for the new post-war age. The symbol of the monarch as the figurehead of Empire provided some solace to some of the bereaved, although doubtless many felt their convictions sorely tested. The grieving parents of Terence Garling, the soldier who had observed the Prince's boredom in Egypt in 1916, felt able to tell the King that they had found 'a silver lining to the cloud' of their son's death in the knowledge that he had 'given his life fighting for all that is good among Nations – the preservation of the British Empire.'⁹² Whereas during the misery of wartime, contact with the royals made little impression on Australians disillusioned with the imperial cause and hostile to the inherent inequality in privileging one man over another, these perceptions would be largely overturned. Bolitho's perception that the Prince fulfilled an emotional need by the people of the Empire in the widespread devastation that followed is insightful. 'The Prince of Wales soon became a public hero and a lion', he explains, noting that Edward's supposed empathy 'satisfied the public craving for peaceful chivalry, to take the place of the filth and misery of war.'⁹³

The change coincided almost exactly with the Armistice at the end of 1918. For example, although the absolute veracity of such tales should be viewed with suspicion, a story recounted for its readers by the *Adelaide Daily Herald* exemplifies the ways the Prince supposedly demonstrated empathy and consideration for ordinary people in a way quite different to his distant father. It began much like A.W. Ralston's sorry tale of men parading without coats in the rain as the King passed by snug in his coat and closed car, but in the case of this Christmas 1918 visit the Prince reportedly 'instantly took off his own coat and insisted on seeing proceedings through without any protection from

⁹² MLSLNSW, MSS 3432. Letter to King George V via Munro Ferguson from W.M. Garling, undated, likely May 1918.

⁹³ Bolitho, *King Edward VIII*, p. 90.

the weather. He got wet through like the troops on parade.’⁹⁴ Such narratives encouraged perceptions of his character as classless, sympathetic and democratic. ‘He not only saw and heard but he felt and shared’, Verney would later assert in 1928.⁹⁵ Whether the Prince deserved this altruistic accolade remains uncertain, although Cooke, otherwise a fairly critical observer, nonetheless believed that he ‘felt a genuine obligation to the men he had seen in the trenches.’⁹⁶ By all accounts this persona held great sway. By March 1919, a South Australian woman writing to her friend of an enthusiastic meeting between Australian soldiers and the Prince at the Army and Navy Leave Club in Paris was confident that ‘after such a scene as that, no one need think that our British throne is tottering. The Army simply worships the Prince.’⁹⁷

Suddenly, the Prince’s personality was intrinsically in tune with favourable aspects of Australian identity. Some estimation of why this might be can be gleaned from accounts of the victory celebrations held in London throughout 1919. Drawing on contrasts between the men of the Dominion forces observed when gathered together, the *Tweed Daily* of November 1919 helpfully outlined for its readers the aspects perceived as unique to the Australian forces that rendered them distinct to those of the other Dominions. As to their appearance, the Australians were ‘tall, lithe, clean-limbed ... wearing a smile that was easily the first cousin to a grin.’ Their temperament reflected their upbringing in ‘an atmosphere of freedom and unrestraint’, and a dislike of ‘swank, form and snobbery.’ The Australian, it asserted, was always ready to make friends, and the Prince ‘one of the very first notable Englishmen to understand the Australians as Australians.’⁹⁸ Accounts such as this make it clear that the figure of the Prince had been firmly incorporated within the redolent culture of mythmaking surrounding the

⁹⁴ ““PRAGGER-WAGGER””, *Daily Herald*, Adelaide, S.A., 21 January 1919, p. 5.

⁹⁵ Verney, *H.R.H.*, p. 114.

⁹⁶ Cooke, *Six men*, p. 48. Cooke and Edward were associates in later years.

⁹⁷ Quoted in ‘SOLDIERS’ TRIBUTE TO PRINCE OF WALES’, *The Register*, Adelaide, S.A., 14 March 1919, p. 6.

⁹⁸ ‘OUR SYDNEY LETTER’, *Tweed Daily*, Murwillumbah, N.S.W., 22 November 1919, p. 4.

emergence of a distinct Australian cultural identity in the immediate post-war period. As Crotty has explained, the manliness of the Australian ‘Diggers’ was held to demonstrate how by the end of the war ‘the nation’s sons, and by extension the nation itself, were worthy and unaffected by the convict stain and the allegedly degenerative effects of the Australian climate and modern civilisation.’⁹⁹ The Prince was no longer seen as aloof, bored or effeminate but expanded to fit the Australians’ ideals for manhood: confident, engaged and masculine.

His shyness in Egypt was quickly forgotten. For example, the *Geelong Advertiser* in May 1919 recounted for its readers a tale of an encounter between the Prince and a crowd of ‘cobbers’ in London. ‘He would easily pass for an Australian in his speech and manner. He has none of the “haw-haw” business of the usual English officer, but is quite natural all the time’ said one.¹⁰⁰ Several years of experience in the public eye had dispelled Edward’s nervousness at being the focus of so much attention. He received ‘all the evidences of his great popularity with the characteristic impassivity of the soldier, but a quick eye could detect the manifest pleasure in his face’ an observer recorded.¹⁰¹ He was even forgiven his poor physique. Writing of a march past Buckingham Palace in March 1919, one soldier offered a reassessment of the Prince’s masculinity in the first flush of victory and amid cheering crowds. ‘The Prince is a paradox. He retains his extremely youthful look, but almost everyone noticed that he had acquired a very manly appearance.’¹⁰² It is fair to say that the championing of these

⁹⁹ Crotty, *Making the Australian male*, p. 28. ‘Digger’ is a slang term that was first used on the goldfields but most commonly used for an ordinary soldier of the Anzac forces; apparently illustrative of the amount of time they spent digging and repairing trenches. John Hirst, *The Australians: insiders & outsiders on the national character since 1770* (Collingwood, Vic.: Black Inc., 2010), p. 46. For example, see ‘THE PRINCE OF WALES’, *Geelong Advertiser*, Vic., 13 September 1919, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ ‘A DIGGER’S IMPRESSION OF THE PRINCE OF WALES’, *Geelong Advertiser*, Vic., 31 May 1919, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ MSLNSW, MSS 1844, Benjamin Alfred Cohen diary. Entry for 23 March 1919. Cohen attributes the text to an associate, Edward Thompson.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* Entry for 23 March 1919.

sympathetic and democratic qualities coincide precisely with broader aspirations of an Australian national character – courage, mateship and larrikin independence - that were seen to have been made manifest on the battlefields and ever since have been seen as arguably central to national identity.¹⁰³ **Image 4**

For his part, the Prince perceived the Australians as ‘a tough, independent yet sensitive people, proud of what they had accomplished on their island continent and quick to take offence.’¹⁰⁴ Crotty argues that by 1920, the Australian male was judged by ‘physical strength, patriotism, military usefulness, and ultimately, his worthiness as a member of the nation and empire.’¹⁰⁵ Such qualities served as a barricade against anxieties concerning the shape of the world to come, and, critically, become from this point on synonymous with the Prince of Wales. According to the press at least, Australian soldiers were quick to claim Edward for their own with the affectionate nickname ‘the Digger Prince’ from early 1919.¹⁰⁶ Although not used in wartime, this now brought the Prince within the ranks of spontaneous and unaffected soldiers, binding him within their collective experience of the conflict, rather than a man apart in his lonely position as the heir to the throne.

Coming into being with the Armistice, mythical Australian perceptions of the Prince as a democratic, un-ceremonial and masculine Digger would only become more powerful prior to his arrival in Australia for the royal tour of 1920. Writing in Sydney that year, the myth had firmly persuaded the Rev. Frank Swyny, who offered some further insights into what he perceived to be the Australian national character in the

¹⁰³ Nick Dyrenfurth, Frank Bongiorno and John Faulkner, *A little history of the Australian Labor Party* (Kensington, N.S.W.: U.N.S.W. Press, 2011), p. 58-59. For further discussion, see Joan Beaumont, *Broken nation: Australians in the Great War* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Windsor, *A king's story*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁵ Crotty, *Making the Australian male*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ For example, ‘THE SPOTLIGHT’, *Evening News*, Sydney, N.S.W., 22 January 1919, p. 4.

pages of *The Methodist*.¹⁰⁷ He argued that during the war the Prince embodied qualities beyond those expected of the monarch as the constitutional exemplar, extending Australian affection for what he called ‘the monarchical idea as it commends itself to the more advanced democracies of the Dominions.’ These advancements he allied with favourable Australian conditions including an unspoilt ‘virgin’ countryside, greater franchise equality, the socially advantageous aspects of industrialisation and the lack of an inherited ‘feudal landlordism.’ This last element was of particular relevance to Swyny, who explained that:

The average Australian despises servility and affectation ... the universal affection in which he [the Prince] is held by the soldiers speaks volumes. No man who failed to evidence the qualities of a winning personality, manliness, and good fellowship, could have made good, as young Edward has done, with our men.¹⁰⁸

The development of the popular façade of the Prince of Wales during the First World War underscored the supportive attitudes of everyday Australians towards the democratisation of the monarchy by the time of the royal tour of 1920. Bolitho also credits the beginnings of this relationship as significant for the future King, arguing that the Anzacs’ ‘vitality and frankness’ prompted a new interest in the people of the Dominions, which would inform his future duties as his ‘father’s greatest ambassador.’¹⁰⁹ The royal family emerged from the conflict with their popularity and prestige largely intact, and in command of their individuality as a tool of perpetuating rule across a newly fragmented Empire. By any estimation, the establishment of a particular Australian affection would serve the ‘dinkum Digger’ well in the immediate post-war period.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ ‘A MAN AND A PRINCE’, *The Methodist*, Sydney, N.S.W., 5 June 1920, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Bolitho, *King Edward VIII*, p. 71.

¹¹⁰ Groom, *Edward the eighth*, p. 74.

A modern exemplar

If the end of the war in 1918 had set the stage for the myths spun around the Prince's masculine and leadership qualities, these would only go from strength to strength before reaching their zenith during his royal tour of 1920. Original sources from this short but heady time also reveal the existence of other overlapping sub-themes that were inherent in expectations for the Prince's public life, newly minted as the ideal Australian male. Edward emerges as a bastion of racial strength, dynastic continuity and protection; an idea in reality almost comically at odds with the genetic abnormalities and inferior physique characteristic of his European-derived pedigree. This in turn illuminates longstanding contemporary social concerns over white dominance within the Empire following the devastation of war. In July 1920, for example, the *Adelaide Register* drew superlatively upon the themes of youth and renewal in homage to the Prince as the symbol of 'a proud virile old nation for ever [sic] renewing its youth.'¹¹¹ As McKenna has observed, the monarch's position as 'the pinnacle of racial identity' underscores white racial superiority, the protection of racial equality and continued imperial expansion into the future.¹¹² These concerns also registered unambiguously in Verney's estimation of the Prince's global popularity by 1928:

He is talked of in places where the Great War was never more than a vague rumour. On the n.w. frontier of India I have seen the eyes of a wild Afghan gleam with interest at the mention of his name. A group of naked Barotse hunters around a campfire in the basin of the Zambesi invited me to applaud a legend of his hunting prowess. I saw his photograph hanging in the mud hut of a Dinka chief in the Soudan. I could have bought picture postcards of him in most of the bazaars of Egypt. I once heard some river arabs discussing him fantastically on a Tigris mahalla.¹¹³

¹¹¹ 'OUR EMPIRE'S AMBASSADOR', *The Register*, Adelaide, S.A., 12 July 1920, p. 7.

¹¹² McKenna, 'Monarchy: from reverence to indifference', p. 262.

¹¹³ Verney, *H.R.H.*, p. 3.

The youthful Prince embodied hope for the future, and became identified with wider social values, most notably the at times paradoxical relationship between nationalism and imperial loyalty. As McKenna puts it ‘if being Australian meant being of white British stock, then the best way to nurture Australian sentiment was to maintain the connection with the protective fountain of that racial stock.’¹¹⁴ The unmistakably delicate English appearance of the supposedly vivacious Edward may also have been a reassuring beacon of continuity in an uncertain world where eugenicists foretold of the extinction and dilution of racial characteristics.

This was by no means a new anxiety; expectations of citizenship were powerfully gendered during the early decades of the twentieth century, alongside a reported decline in the birth rate and the formal implementation of the exclusive 1901 White Australia settlement policy. In 1912, for example, the Labor government instituted a £5 maternity allowance payable to European mothers only.¹¹⁵ As Marina Larsson has shown, the robustness of the Australian stock became subject to increasing post-war scrutiny as eugenicists feared that the ‘unfit’ were breeding out the ‘fit.’¹¹⁶ After the end of the war, the perceived threat to racial continuity became more acute, given that the ‘most virile and most productive’ had supposedly been lost through death or permanent disability.¹¹⁷ The reproductive aspect of marriage loomed large in post-war Australian imaginations, and so too did personal re-evaluations of what this meant in an everyday sense. The pool of marriageable men had shrunk, and women outnumbered men.¹¹⁸ Many questioned the established template for marriage as critical to the maintenance of the birth rate, and some advocated for artificial insemination and

¹¹⁴ McKenna, *The captive republic*, p. 217.

¹¹⁵ Crotty, *Making the Australian male*, p. 29.

¹¹⁶ Marina Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs: living with the scars of war* (Kensington, N.S.W.: UN.S.W. Press, 2009), p. 84.

¹¹⁷ Contemporary medical journal, quoted in *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-88.

a culture of celibate motherhood as an alternative method of ensuring racial continuation.¹¹⁹

Later, during the 1920s this threat would also be clearly discernible in the fostering of agricultural and nation-building skills that furthered the government's geopolitical ambitions, and countered concerns over Australia's isolated and unprotected position within the Empire. As well as physical prowess and whiteness, potential settler families were also expected to possess certain desirable personal qualities: steadiness, affability, traditional morality and a work ethic.

Within this climate, the Prince's virility and reproductive capabilities were increasingly of interest to Australians. This is not to say that there had not been for many years great curiosity concerning who, and most important when, he would marry and secure the divine right of succession to his offspring. From the earliest years of his public life, his marriage was perceived by many Australians as a critical element in the success of his future Kingship. For example, despite his tender years, the *Mackay Daily Mercury* of October 1911 saw fit to fret over the apparent lack of a suitable royal Princess to be found within the European dynasties.¹²⁰ Not to be defeated, the *Perth Daily News* of the following month took on the guise of matchmaker, devoting several columns to a list of prospective princesses, finishing as a last resort with those of minor dynastic worth 'in a sort of subsidiary list.' It remarked, erroneously as it turned out, that Edward could easily insist on some flexibility in his marriage choice if he wanted to, as 'reasons of state prevail only to a certain extent.'¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Frank Bongiorno, *The sex lives of Australians: a history* (Collingwood, Vic.: Black Inc., 2012), pp. 141-42.

¹²⁰ 'THE NEXT PRINCESS OF WALES', *Daily Mercury*, Mackay, Qld., 20 October 1911, p. 3.

¹²¹ 'PRINCE EDWARD'S FUTURE BRIDE', *The Daily News*, Perth, W.A., 4 November 1911, p. 9.

By early 1915 German heiresses were definitively excluded from the running and it was rumoured he had settled on marrying one of the four daughters of Tsar Nicholas II.¹²² By the end of that year the notion of the Prince marrying a British aristocrat, ‘or even a commoner’ had been mooted as a reasonable alternative to continuing to broker alliances with the European royal dynasties.¹²³ The abandonment of dynastic marriage, enforced by the dissolution of the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian thrones by 1917-18, was one element in the post-war reinvention of the British royal family. Hayden has shown how the supposed relaxation of the royal family’s attitudes towards strategic alliances reflects instead one aspect of a larger and deliberate process of transformation of the Germanic house of Hanover to the newly English Windsor.¹²⁴ King George V replaced the family’s grand Germanic titles with a new invented tradition of English names. Royal status was not automatically conferred to those outside the uppermost tier of the family. The pre-war associations with German princesses became distant memory as British non-royals were encouraged as suitable prospective partners for the first time.¹²⁵

Nonetheless, in the immediate post-war period, Edward seemed manifestly unaware of the importance of maintaining his bloodline, and instead appeared to be embracing head on all elements of post-war modernity. There was a discernible sense of optimism surrounding the Prince’s public life in the post-war period that underpinned his suitability as a role model for a young, racially distinct, modern Australian identity. Jill Matthews identifies ‘modernity’ as encompassing a pantheon of social changes including urban redevelopment, innovative machinery, increased female freedom, the emergence of leisure time, and international markets, casual fashions and irreverent

¹²² ‘THE PRINCE OF WALES’, *Rochester Express*, Vic., 12 February 1915, p. 6.

¹²³ ‘OUR PRINCE’S BRIDE’, *The Register*, Adelaide, S.A., 1 November 1915, p. 8.

¹²⁴ Hayden, *Symbol and privilege*, p. 50.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

cultural influences.¹²⁶ In this case, Edward's known penchant for violent sports, socialising, the most casual and flashy of fashions, motor cars and airplanes, and his dislike of red carpets, hats and other monarchical trappings marked him as an exemplar of progressive and acquisitive modernity. **Image 5**

This casualness was an aspect of his persona frequently repeated in cheap and plentiful Australian newspapers, pictorials and magazines, themselves heralds of modernity. 'The spirit of youth and buoyant outlook on life have an infectiousness and romantic charm when carried by somebody who is destined to grace the greatest throne in history', observed the *Adelaide Register* indulgently.¹²⁷ From the early years of the twentieth century, modernity also manifested itself in radio and cinematographic technologies, also part of the media pantheon embraced by the newly visible British monarchy.¹²⁸ As Linkoff describes, this literally offered 'a new way of seeing the monarchy.'¹²⁹ Following on from Queen Victoria's cosy but deliberately crafted scenes of domesticity, journalists were producing casual and candid images that revealed moments of introspection and aspects of royal private life not normally seen beyond the rendering of births, marriages and other rites of passage. In short, by 1920, Edward appeared to have achieved the most desirable combination of personal appeal and capable leadership as a role model for the younger generations at a time of great change.¹³⁰ His disinclination to abandon bachelorhood was fondly tolerated by his admirers while he was a young man in his twenties and thirties but, as later chapters will discuss, became a point of contention as he grew closer to ascending the throne.

¹²⁶ Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance hall & picture palace: Sydney's romance with modernity* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Currency Press, 2005).

¹²⁷ 'OUR EMPIRE'S AMBASSADOR', *The Register*, Adelaide, S.A., 12 July 1920, p. 7.

¹²⁸ Sinclair, *Two Georges*, p. 154-55.

¹²⁹ Linkoff, 'The photographic attack on his royal highness', p. 280.

¹³⁰ Mayhall, 'The Prince of Wales Versus Clark Gable', p. 537.

A member of the family

With the idealisation of the Prince's marriage in mind, further connection can be made between the supposed domestic aspirations of the royal family and the corresponding private ambitions of the everyday Australian population, who looked to the monarch as a familial role model. There had been a gap of almost two decades between the royal Federation tour of 1901 and the Prince's arrival in 1920. Interested Australians at home had been able to follow the royal family's public life in the intervening years via the press, but unlike the troops in wartime Egypt and France, had not seen them in person. Accordingly, some people practised other ways of celebrating and perpetuating the figure of the monarch in an everyday domestic sense.

Firstly, even for those uninterested in far-away royals, their image was pervasive. As well as through owning copies of official portraits, Australian admirers were most familiar with representations of royalty through the multitude of commemorative objects on which their portraits appeared. The King, Queen and their children materialised, sometimes incongruously, on a range of household objects including tea-sets, gossip magazines, toiletries and other perishable goods. Portraits were hung in schools, businesses and municipal centres. Commercial vendors traded loosely on associated phrases such as 'royal' or 'princely', or used illustrated portraits vaguely reminiscent of the royals to sell a range of goods intended for men, women and children. Believing that the royal tour of 1920 would 'mark an epoch in our national history', the W.H. Paling Company suggested that customers also 'mark an epoch in your home life by buying a player piano.'¹³¹ The proliferation of material culture and ephemera available also allowed Australians to become familiar with the multitude of royal weddings, births, christenings and other rites of passage reported on in the British

¹³¹ Unknown author, *Souvenir, Prince of Wales visit to Australia 1920* (Sydney, N.S.W.: John Sands Ltd, N.S.W. Bookstall Co. Ltd, 1920), p. 40. Item 554506, NLA.

press. Central to theatricalities such as weddings, accessions and royal tours was the manufacture and appropriation of royal-themed flags, banners, pins, commemorative medals, fancy dress costumes, pictorial programs and other souvenirs. McKenna identifies such souvenirs as the ‘building blocks’ in the construction of common feeling towards the monarchy.¹³² **Image 6**

By purchasing and displaying a souvenir, patrons were firstly identifying themselves within a community of like-minded loyalists, and also retaining a memento of the day or event as a keepsake. A.J. Morison, a South Australian clerk, wrote to the prime minister in 1920 in the hope of adding to his ‘large collection from all parts’ of royal-themed ephemera, having been collecting for almost 20 years since the royal visit of 1901. Perhaps over-optimistically, Morison requested copies of ‘all the invitation cards, including menu cards, ball programmes etc., issued by the Commonwealth Government for functions.’¹³³ The collectors’ gaze was not confined only to officially produced mementoes; almost anything related could be perceived as valuable. In a tone of outrage, the Melbourne *Argus* reported how in New Zealand in 1920 prior to the Prince’s arrival in Australia, souvenir hunters ‘took possession of everything that was removable’ following a people’s supper at Wanganui, including four silver vases, 400 cups and saucers, 120 yards of blue and gold ribbon and a three-tier cake.¹³⁴

By purchasing these familiar domestic objects to bring into the home as a keepsake or functional object, these ‘popular monarchists’ perpetuated a warm and friendly interest in the far-away doings of the royal family.¹³⁵ In 1936, Kathleen Stephen, for example, recalled fondly how as a child all the members of the royal family

¹³² McKenna, ‘Monarchy: from reverence to indifference’, p. 267.

¹³³ NAA, A2, 1920/1113 PART 26. Letter to Prime Minister’s Secretary from [?]A.J. Morison, 12 June 1920.

¹³⁴ ‘PRINCE’S TOUR’, *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 8 May 1920, p. 19.

¹³⁵ ‘Popular monarchism’ is usefully defined by Connors as the ‘widespread affection for the occupant of the throne, of the kind that has found expression through effusive celebrations and in private through collections or memorabilia, or from active seeking of royal news.’ Connors, ‘The Glittering Thread’, p. 14.

were ‘familiar to me by sight’, and in later life held a ‘warm place in my heart and memory.’¹³⁶ The concentration and repetition of royal cinematographic and visual imagery served to firmly establish the familiarity of members of the royal family in both a domestic and community context. For some soldiers who laid eyes on the Prince of Wales during wartime, it was as if they were recognising an old acquaintance. ‘I would know him from his photo anywhere’, George Faulkner remarked in 1916.¹³⁷ Another recalled the appearance of the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace in 1919 as ‘a moment I had always long [sic] for, to see the King and Queen in the flesh, as I had so often seen them in the Pictures.’¹³⁸ Others wrote of the remarkable and ‘beautiful’ sight to their children, for whom visits to England were synonymous with seeing the royals in person. ‘Fancy yesterday I saw the King, Queen, Prince of Wales, & Princess Mary’, wrote Arthur Burrowes to his young daughter from London.¹³⁹ These friendly impressions of the royal family were not based on reality but created through experience of numerous visual types of representation.

A large body of work agrees that such representations and reminders of royalty have long been manipulated to control particular social tensions and inspire certain loyalties.¹⁴⁰ By virtue of this perceived familiarity, the post-war Prince of Wales functioned as a foil for Australian imagining, assured by most sources of his affability, domesticity and empathy. In part, this can be attributed to the long-standing and familiar presence of the royal family. The familiarity of the Prince across the Dominions may also be a symptom peculiar to the press attitudes of the age. In his study of Edward’s

¹³⁶ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Lyons from I.K. Stephen, 13 December 1936.

¹³⁷ MLNSLNSW, MSS 1151. Entry for 15 August 1916.

¹³⁸ MLNSLNSW, MSS 1844. Entry for 23 March 1919.

¹³⁹ MLNSLNSW, MSS 3413, Arthur John Moore Burrowes correspondence. Postcard to ‘Ruth’ from Burrowes, undated.

¹⁴⁰ For further discussion, see Helen Hackett, ‘Dreams or designs, cults or constructions? The study of images of monarchs’, *The Historical Journal*, 44/3 (2001), pp. 811-23; Thomas N. Corns, *The royal image: representations of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

public persona in Britain, Mort credits the onslaught of press and newsreel journalism that accompanied royal tours as having loosened Edward from both the ‘ritualised pomp’ and ‘highly conventional representations of domesticity’ common to previous monarchs, giving him more malleable and accessible public profile.¹⁴¹ This seems also true for Australia, meaning it may be that Australians hoped to find, or at least were more readily able to identify points of commonality with their own lives.

Moral integrity was a critical element in the construct of post-war ideal Australian masculinity, and extending beyond expectations for the Prince’s reproductive capabilities, can also be discerned in Australian attitudes to his private life. As later chapters will discuss in greater detail, the abdication would reveal a deep divide in Australian attitudes towards the relationship between public responsibility and private life, specifically the characteristics of a successful marriage. Popular expectations of royal behaviour in private life lend useful insight into broad cultural changes that coincide with changing attitudes towards individual freedoms during the immediate post-war era. Frank Bongiorno, for example, has identified more permissive inter-war understandings of sexuality and a revolt in some quarters against the traditional morals associated with ‘Victorianism.’¹⁴² This turn from communitarian values was shaped by a number of social factors, including protestations over sexual double standards in married life, the economic breakdown of the Depression, the changing composition and roles of individuals within the family unit, and growing fears over the fragility of the Australian stock. Freedom to vote and work in a professional capacity had also contributed to some extent to the emancipation of Australian women.

If on one hand inter-war Australians were questioning the fundamentals underpinning married and family relations, they were also aware of their formal public

¹⁴¹ Mort, ‘Love in a Cold Climate’, p. 16.

¹⁴² Bongiorno, *The sex lives of Australians*, p. 145.

cessation. Drawing its legislative basis from British (primarily English) law, Australia's colonial familial model hardly differed from its precedent. Later, as Ailsa Burns explains, the cost of dissolving a marriage between the wars limited its legalities to wealthy Australians, and so it may be that many other couples simply quietly separated, thus avoiding the social stigma attached.¹⁴³ This remains difficult to quantify as it was not until 1947 that the then Bureau of Census and Statistics included 'married but permanently separated' as a category.¹⁴⁴ Divorce may have been the last resort for separated individuals who wished to remarry, and was only awarded along certain protracted grounds and heard only in the Supreme Court.

Nonetheless, divorce was irrefutably on the rise. In 1920 there were 1148 divorce cases recorded nationally, and this had more than doubled to 2424 by 1935.¹⁴⁵ The changing cultural context may be attributable for changing patterns of behaviour and attitudes. Of the colonial period, Henry Finlay points to a 'degree of rootlessness in the Australian population ... the migratory propensities around the continent ... the relatively high rate of desertions' as allowing for a more sympathetic view of divorced individuals.¹⁴⁶ By the end of the war, Larsson suggests that an increase in the breakdown of marriage can be attributed to aspects of post-war life such as disability, prolonged separation, adultery, desertion and venereal disease.¹⁴⁷

The divide in the social response can be exemplified by the opposing view of long-serving Supreme Court judges John Barry and Owen Dixon. The latter insisted on a strict view of the marital oath and social responsibility, while the former wished the

¹⁴³ Ailsa Burns, *Breaking up: separation and divorce in Australia* (West Melbourne, Vic.: Nelson, 1980), p. 18.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁴⁵ Australian Institute of Family Studies, 'Number of divorces and crude divorce rate 1901', <<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/info/charts/divorce/>>, accessed 1 October 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Among the working and middle-classes, at least. Henry Finlay, *To have but not to hold: a history of attitudes to marriage and divorce in Australia 1858-1975* (Annandale, N.S.W.: Federation Press, 2005), p. 55.

¹⁴⁷ Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, p. 81.

law to provide for the social ills occasioned by violence and private hardship.¹⁴⁸ On one hand, inter-war conservative commentators were eager to preserve the social *status quo* from perceived moral ruin and ultimate collapse. James Duhig, the Archbishop of Brisbane, for example, in 1925 warned his parishioners against a ‘terrible invasion of Australia by a multiplicity of highly immoral influences’, which he identified as the ‘unpermitted liberty’ of young people, dancing halls, drinking, attending races, gambling, the use of motor cars for ‘night excursions’ and so on. Duhig equated the reality of divorce with the breakup of ‘hundreds of families’, also condemning the offspring of divorced parents to be forever stigmatised and ‘sent adrift.’¹⁴⁹

On the other hand, Bongiorno also identifies an inter-war turn to sexual modernity and increasing emphasis on individual happiness that served to redefine marriage as an affinity based on love and pleasure.¹⁵⁰ In the British context, Mort too has observed that by the 1930s, citizenship encompassed a ‘rich interiorised subjectivity’ and aspirations of ‘companionable marriage based on heterosexual mutuality and by an accessible ideal of conjugal human love.’¹⁵¹ Certainly, a growing insistence on the rights of the individual can be discerned in published opinion that coincides with the rise of the Prince’s public life. The *International Socialist* of 1918, for example, aspired to marriage ‘only when there is an affinity.’¹⁵²

More than anything else, social concerns over the Prince’s domestic life and projections therein have the potential to lend important insight into the emotional lives of observers. A few years later in 1921, a writer to the *Geelong Advertiser* rejected the idea that it was ‘looseness and degradation’ that contributed to increasing instances of divorce, but instead pointed to a trend whereby unhappy marriages were brought ‘out

¹⁴⁸ Mark Finnane and John Myrtle, *JV Barry: a life* (Sydney, N.S.W.: UN.S.W., Press, 2007), p. 227.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Moral Poisons’, *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 19 November 1925, p. 18.

¹⁵⁰ Bongiorno, *The sex lives of Australians*, pp. 198-200.

¹⁵¹ Mort, ‘Love in a Cold Climate’, p. 8.

¹⁵² ‘Slams and Jabs’, *The International Socialist*, Sydney, N.S.W., 26 October 1918, p. 2.

into the open and have done with it.’ Instead of suffering within an unhappy relationship, men and women had discovered the ‘right to love and be loved’, they continued. ‘They are becoming less and less afraid of asserting it ... they all use the same kind of language’ asserting a claim to private happiness.¹⁵³ As will be shown in chapters 4, 5 and 6, these two sharply divided views of the rights of the individual to pursue happiness and their obligations as citizens would be most sharply etched during the crux of the abdication.

This chapter accounted for the changing nature of Australian attraction to the Prince of Wales from before the First World War and over the following years preceding the royal tour of 1920. The novel situation created by the global devastation resulted in a range of new invented traditions specific to the public life of the popular Prince of Wales. Four main qualities, or roles, are often repeated throughout popular and private sources dating to this time period. These reflect distinct idealised masculine perceptions of Edward as a symbol of the Crown, as an inspiration for peace, as a modern exemplar and as a member of the family. Although during wartime the future King fell far short of prevalent ideals of masculinity and leadership, his unimpressive persona was almost instantly adapted within a pervasive myth that arose alongside the Armistice. The figure of the ‘Digger Prince’ grew in stature and symbolism, establishing an emotional connection with Australian troops that would set the scene for his royal tour of 1920. By the inter-war period, the monarch-to-be’s personal qualities became a critical aspect of how Kingships were publicly performed. As we will see, the preparations for the proposed tour of 1920 that ensued from early 1919 in both Britain and Australia aimed to further safeguard and promote these qualities to the Empire.

¹⁵³ ‘WHY DIVORCE IS INCREASING’, *Geelong Advertiser*, Vic., 31 August 1921, p. 7.

Chapter 2: The Empire's salesman

Gifted with all the needs of thriving man ... He can realise our "ideal" plan.

-William Watson Boyes, 1920.¹

Edward's tour of the country between May and August 1920 would mark royalty's fourth visit to Australia. Regularly enacted since the middle of the nineteenth century, the royal tour has long been a marker of continuity in Australia's relationship with the British monarchy. The royal family across generations recognised the need to be seen in all parts of the Empire, in the same way as they toured to regional areas of Britain. With the turn of the twentieth century, this became more logistically possible given developing seafaring and railway technologies. Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, was the first member of the royal family to visit Australia in 1867, and then the adolescent Princes George and Albert Edward in 1881. In 1901, Albert Edward, the then Prince of Wales, and his wife Alexandra had planned to visit Australia to take part in the Federation celebrations but were replaced following the death of Queen Victoria by their son, the adult Prince George and his wife Mary, then the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York.

Some nineteen years later, as this chapter will discuss, their son Edward's 1920 visit would take place amid the transformed cultural circumstances generated by the First World War. Here, the political strategy behind the tour of 'the Empire's salesman' emerges most compellingly in contrast with all that had gone before.²

¹ William Watson Boyes, *The "Digger" prince* (s.l.: s.n., 1920). Item 239906, NLA.

² 'Traveller In Many Lands', *News*, Adelaide, S.A., 26 September 1932, p. 4.

The British preparations

Pre-war Australian newspapers reveal that a royal visit by the Prince had been rumoured for many years. A decade before Edward eventually set foot on Australian soil, the *Adelaide Evening Journal* of January 1910 announced that the young Princes Edward and Albert were to embark on an Empire-wide tour the following year, conveyed from port to port by battleship.³ The ‘royal tourists’ were to be shown the far reaches of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India in a manner reminiscent of their father’s 1881 cruise, ostensibly to further their naval training and to introduce them to the disparate peoples of the Empire. No confirmation eventuated, but in September 1913 the *Adelaide Advertiser* further plied its readers with rumours from London that the Princes, by then 19 and 18-years-old respectively, were to embark on a tour of the Dominions in 1915.⁴ This time, the purpose of the visit, the journalist explained, was for the visiting royals to fulfil a token constitutional role; to open the first session of federal Parliament to take place in the fledgling city of Canberra. When asked for comment, prime minister Joseph Cook reportedly merely smiled at the suggestion that Parliament House would have sufficiently advanced beyond its foundation stones by 1915.⁵

As it turned out, the onset of war would overturn much more than the plans for Canberra’s Parliament House. Proposals for a royal tour were revived following the Armistice and Imperial Conferences, and the notion of a grand, convivial but transient tour encompassing all the Dominions collectively was abandoned in favour of individual extended visits. From this point onwards, the Prince’s projected tour became an instrument of policy intended to rally popular support for imperialism. The timing of any such visit was critical. As the King’s Private Secretary, Lord Stamfordham, later

³ ‘ROYAL TOURISTS’, *Evening Journal*, Adelaide, S.A., 6 January 1910, p. 2.

⁴ ‘PRINCE OF WALES’, *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, S.A., 11 September 1913, p. 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*

confided to the Australian Governor-General, Ronald Crauford Munro Ferguson, ‘the psychological moment for these visits is as soon as possible after the return of the troops to the different dominions.’⁶ This comment stemmed from the British government’s desire to capitalise on the wave of imperial unity and collective pride in the Allies’ achievement that followed victory. The *Catholic Press* of June 1920, for example, quoted the speech made by Lord Milner, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the House of Lords on the future modes of consultation between the Dominions. Here he urged that ‘the splendid harmony existing in wartime was not to be frittered away in peace time’ and that a formal policy on communication would prevent the Dominions from separating and ‘going different roads even without knowing it.’⁷ This hopeful sentiment had been previously echoed by the King in a wartime speech to troops. The Germans had set out to ‘smash the British Empire! - smash it to pieces - and look, just look ... see what they’ve really done. They’ve made an Empire of us’, he claimed.⁸

This rallying call may be considered alongside Piers Brendon and Philip Whitehead’s observation that the post-war Empire’s ‘drumbeat sounded louder’ as its power was threatened.⁹ The British powers’ desire for renewed imperial cohesion aimed to offset other perceived dangers to be found within this flexible relationship between imperialist fervour and growing Dominion nationalism. It is within this state of flux that the Anzacs’ seemingly spontaneous alignment of Edward’s post-war persona alongside newly conceived Australian national identities, as established in the previous chapter, is better understood. As Beaumont has explained, the increased nationalistic sentiment that arose with the war ‘did not eclipse imperial loyalty. Rather, national pride was subsumed into the imperial imagining which remained, in public discourse at least, the

⁶ NLA, MS 696/509, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson papers. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Stamfordham, 9 December 1919.

⁷ ‘IMPERIALISM AND BIGOTRY’, *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 24 June 1920, p. 27.

⁸ Quoted by John Monash, 30 September 1916, himself quoted in ‘Back to 1914-18 With Sir John Monash’, *The Queenslander*, Brisbane, Qld., 20 December 1934, p. 19.

⁹ Brendon and Whitehead, *The Windsors*, p. 121.

dominant value.’¹⁰ By the end of the war, she argues, the nation emerged ‘in many cases more independent and self-consciously Australian but still proudly British.’¹¹ In no uncertain terms, these ideological concerns amid the jubilation of victory were writ large in the transformation of the Prince of Wales’ wartime persona.

However, as Milner and many at the British government’s London Colonial Office feared, the turmoil could potentially alter or disperse Dominion loyalties in other, as yet uncertain, ways. It is likely that Stamfordham’s urgent percipience was justified. For example, Renee Lockwood identifies one of victory’s most pivotal aspects as ‘the sense it created of breaking away from the British’, marking a definitive end to Australia’s colonial history, and the beginning of a newly independent era drawing on previously unrecognised skills and strengths. The bravery and power of the Anzac soldiers, she observes, was held by contemporary commentators to exceed that of the British.¹² These characteristics were also applicable to the rebirth of the nation-state itself, meaning that this growing self-confidence and assertion could have been perceived in London as prompting profound reappraisals of Australia’s continuing loyalty to Britain. As this chapter will go on to discuss, Australian supporters of imperialism at home were both elated by victory yet profoundly divided over the nation’s contribution to the conflict and its future strategic direction.

Accordingly, the idea of a substantial tour of Australia by the Prince of Wales was planned following the signing of the Armistice. Rumours reached the Australian press but were again denied in Parliament in December 1918.¹³ Instead, Admiral Lord John Jellicoe, commander of the British fleet, was dispatched in early 1919, ostensibly to gather information for a naval policy review but also to encounter Australians in an

¹⁰ Beaumont, “‘Unitedly we have fought’”, p. 399.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Lockwood, ‘The Great War, the Soldier and the Holy ANZAC Spirit’, pp. 122-23.

¹³ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 19 December 1918, p. 9820.

attempt to instil public pride in imperial war heroes and the protective power of the British navy over Australian interests. The visit was underwhelming for some. The veteran labour-movement publicist Henry Boote, for example, viewed it as nothing more than an attempt to impress ‘upon us how pleasant it would be to wear the gilded chains of subservience’, remarking that Australia took such visits ‘coolly.’¹⁴ Nevertheless, Munro Ferguson was convinced that the visit had been a tremendous success (‘no man could be better fitted than Lord Jellicoe to ‘star it’ round the Empire’), although he also lamented that ‘the appearance amongst us of such men is so uncommon.’¹⁵

Happily he did not have long to wait for the arrival of another. Rumours concerning a possible forthcoming visit of the Prince of Wales, accompanied once again by General Birdwood, would not be quelled.¹⁶ Although this inspired pairing would not ultimately be realised, it was nonetheless the first indication of the militaristic agenda that would pervade the tour that eventuated. The flames of rumour were fanned again in mid-1919 when Edward casually remarked to a gathering of Australians at the Aldwych Y.M.C.A. in London that he hoped to ‘see them again soon.’¹⁷ Although it was publicly denied, confidential affirmation of his visit reached Munro Ferguson in August 1919.¹⁸ In the meantime, Birdwood’s visit was delayed and the Prince departed instead for his first imperial tour of Canada.¹⁹

Buoyed by the Canadians’ enthusiastic response, King George V directed that two further extended tours be implemented in 1920; firstly to New Zealand and Australia during the cooler months of the year, to be swiftly followed by yet another

¹⁴ ‘THE PRINCE’S VISIT’, *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 15 April 1920, p. 3.

¹⁵ NLA, MS 696/1176. Letter to W. Long from Munro Ferguson, 5 August 1919.

¹⁶ ‘ONLY BIRDWOOD’, *The Northern Herald*, Cairns, Qld., 2 January 1919, p. 7.

¹⁷ ‘PRINCE OF WALES’ VISIT’, *Advocate*, Burnie, Tas., 18 July 1919, p. 1.

¹⁸ NAA, A11052, 1. Letter to Hughes from Munro Ferguson, 8 August 1919. It is assumed that the Prince would have been formally invited to visit Australia by Hughes.

¹⁹ For further discussion of this visit, see Beadle, ‘The Canadian press reaction to the abdication of Edward VIII.’

departure to India. The visits were overtly intended to boost imperial sentiment by promoting Edward as a celebrated personality. British prime minister David Lloyd George hoped that the appearance of the popular Prince ‘might do more to calm the discord than half a dozen solemn Imperial Conferences.’²⁰ Returning from Canada, Edward was to spend only three months in England before the planned departure for Australia, causing him considerable anguish at the enforced separation from Freda Dudley Ward.²¹ Lloyd George also hoped to make him conform to a set of exacting moral behaviours by distancing him from his lover.²² As his father aged, it was becoming apparent that the wilful Prince needed training in the outward management of his public life.

Though the visit was not confirmed to the Australian public until February 1920, official arrangements were by then well under way.²³ Records of the spirited exchanges between the Prince’s staff and the British government during the preparations confirm that from the outset the tour was highly politicised and the pro-imperial dimensions were explicit. The organisation drew upon a growing culture of reinvented royal diplomatic ventures by King Edward VII and King George V during the earlier years of the twentieth century.²⁴ Here the monarch’s particular cordial brand of ‘soft’ international relations sought to capitalise on the symbolic power of British royalty overseas in a manner explicitly calculated to further the objectives of the British government and diplomatic services. Nonetheless, some attempt was made to disguise the tour’s political intentions with a façade of benevolent and classless popular engagement. For example, Lloyd George took ‘serious objection’ to the suggestion that Colonel Edward Grigg, a former journalist and member of the Prince’s Secretariat, be

²⁰ Lloyd George, quoted in Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 132.

²¹ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 124.

²² Murphy, *Monarchy and the end of empire*, p. 24.

²³ NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Milner, 31 January 1920.

²⁴ For further discussion, see Glencross, *The State Visits of Edward VII*, 2016.

given the title ‘Political Secretary.’²⁵ Although keenly aware of the tour’s ‘important political results’, Hugh Thornton, Milner’s Private Secretary at the Colonial Office, worried nonetheless about the use of ‘phraseology which might imply that the tour had definite political objects.’²⁶

Of course, as was made clear during the Canadian tour, the separation of the innocuous and the political was nigh on impossible. ‘Everything that the Prince of Wales does on such a tour has a political bearing’, Grigg maintained.²⁷ The division of responsibility almost led to a skirmish between Grigg and Lionel Halsey, a former Admiral of the Fleet and the Prince’s Chief of Staff. Both men had accompanied him on the tour of Canada. The Prince had developed a strong friendship with Halsey, although the Colonial Office’s Under Secretary Leo Amery thought his handling of political matters incompetent.²⁸ However, the Prince’s strained relationship with Grigg continued to rankle. ‘We are not in any way kindred spirits’, Edward wrote to his father, remarking that for all Grigg’s experience he was ‘terribly impetuous and becomes daily more difficult to work with.’²⁹ Ultimately, Grigg won his autonomy over most of the public relations aspects of the tour. Halsey was given responsibility for the management of the refitted battleship in which they were to travel, H.M.S. *Renown*, and a range of other duties including finance, management of staff, naval arrangements and correspondence, dress and equipment, medical provision, transport and supplies, escort and guards, and police.³⁰

In time, the Australian public would come to be familiar with the other members of the Prince’s inner retinue. These included his trusted Private Secretary, Sir Godfrey

²⁵ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1580/20. Letter to R. Baring, Lord Cromer, from Stamfordham, 3 February 1920. In the end, Grigg travelled simply as ‘Secretary.’

²⁶ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1580/6. Letter to Stamfordham from Thornton, 26 January 1920.

²⁷ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1580/2. Letter to Stamfordham from Grigg, 20 January 1920.

²⁸ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 123.

²⁹ RA, EDW/PRIV/MAIN/A/2291. Letter to King George V from Edward, Prince of Wales, 29 June 1920.

³⁰ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1580/11. Undated folio detailing staff responsibilities.

Thomas, as well as Captain Dudley North, Lord Claud Hamilton and Captain Joey Legh as his equerries, and a party of nine servants, five clerks, two detective officers and five orderlies. The last addition to the group was his ‘vigorous and high-spirited’ 19-year-old cousin Louis ‘Dickie’ Mountbatten.³¹ ‘One doesn’t often come across such a charming fellow’ the Prince enthused.³² Officially acting as Halsey’s Flag Lieutenant, the mischievous Mountbatten was firstly a companion for the Prince. Also on board were his bodyguard, Sergeant Alfred Burt, Paymaster Lieutenant-Commander Arthur Jannion as Halsey’s Secretary, and Surgeon-Commander A.C.W. Newport as the Medical Officer. **Image 7**

Despite drawing on the Canadian precedent, the organisation for the Australian tour was considerable. Administrators in both Australia and Britain generated a welter of correspondence in mapping out an itinerary that would change almost daily. Some sympathy must be apportioned to Grigg, responsible as he was for the manufacture of an itinerary typified by visual accessibility and studied political disinterest, and catering to the agenda of both the Australian hosts and the British visitors. As the Prince himself later described in his autobiography, he saw his role during the imperial tours as to mingle with veterans, schoolchildren, ‘natives’ and officials in order to ‘remind my father’s subjects of the kindly benefits attaching to the ties of Empire.’³³ The Australian tour certainly fell within this definition, shaped as it was from the earliest stages to impress his persona as a modern exemplar and a member of the family upon a range of citizens. Although on the surface, and as the Prince perceived, this was a ‘simple mission’, the preparation was anything but.³⁴

³¹ Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 152.

³² RA, EDW/PRIV/MAIN/A/2291. Letter to King George V from Edward, Prince of Wales, 29 June 1920.

³³ Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 152.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

The intended participants were clearly identified by Grigg from the outset. Several months before the proposed departure, he invited Australian federal and state organisers to submit ideas for functions and engagements that allowed for the Prince to come into contact with specific groups of Australians. Of primary and specific consideration were those who had participated in war service. 'His Royal Highness desires to meet as many returned soldiers and sailors as possible at all points of his journey' he directed.³⁵ The organisers wished to present the Prince as an inspiration for peace and a former soldier bound by experience to the veterans and their families who made up a significant proportion of Australian society. The tour offered the chance to capitalise on and strengthen the connection between the so-called 'Diggers [sic] friend' and the Anzacs that had begun, albeit unpromisingly, in 1916.³⁶

The tour was intended as a national event; plans to use Australia's extensive railway network allowed for gatherings in both large cities and urban centres and smaller regional towns where the royal train could halt or simply slow down in passing. Particular consideration was extended to servicemen suffering from 'shell-shock' who may have struggled with crowded and noisy environs.³⁷ Citing the 'strongest aversion to putting any unnecessary strain' on returned servicemen, the King agreed to abandon the traditional yet thunderous on-shore naval salutes at the suggestion of the Governor-General.³⁸ Milner thought the concern overstated and could not resist the pointed (and surely incorrect) remark that in London, despite being home to severely traumatised soldiers and civilians, 'artillery salutes are constantly fired and no bad effects have been reported.'³⁹

³⁵ NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Milner, 28 January 1920.

³⁶ NAA, A2, 1920/1113 PART 26. Letter to M.L. Shepherd from B. Cork, 24 March 1920.

³⁷ NAA, A11052, 3. Letter to Munro Ferguson from White, 11 March 1920.

³⁸ NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Milner, 16 March 1920.

³⁹ Ibid.

Beyond returned men, the scope of social engagement was broad. There was little ambiguity as to the popular focus of the Prince's visit: '[He] wishes to see as much as possible of the people of Australia ... whenever it is necessary to choose between seeing the sights and seeing the people preference will be given to the latter', Grigg directed.⁴⁰ Although he also specified that Edward liked the presence of women as well as men, the Australian national administrator, former AIF commander Cyril Brudenell White, considered the Prince's landing at St Kilda a masculine affair. 'It has been decided that ladies will not be included in the arrangements' he wrote.⁴¹ As will be discussed in the next chapter, nurses and Red Cross workers nonetheless fought for their representation during the tour and in some states held a prominent position in official military-inspired reviews and parades. Most Australian women were to set eyes on the Prince in less formal circumstances, most notably the 'People's Receptions' that would feature throughout.

From the earliest stages, Grigg aimed to replicate the numerous publicly focused gatherings that had proved successful in Canada, outlining to Munro Ferguson his idea of a 'popular reception to which the general public would be admitted without ticket or social selection of any kind.'⁴² In contrast to the idea that Edward should enjoy seeing something of the Australian people, these arrangements were instead designed for the edification of the large crowds who journeyed to see the royal personage on display. This decision reinforced the personable and democratic façade that was one of the dominant elements in the Prince of Wales' Australian persona, and is revealing of the known expectations for what a royal public event should be. Unlike its antecedents in Britain, this Australian royal progress garnered widespread attention through its

⁴⁰ NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Milner, 28 January 1920.

⁴¹ NAA, A6678, R56. Memo from White, 3 May 1920.

⁴² NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Milner, 28 January 1920.

consciously inclusive and supposedly apolitical character, and it was not pitched at any one class or section of society.

Also clearly established was the scope and tenor of the Prince's public utterances so as to be scrupulously moderate, restrained and inclusive. As Stamfordham told him, the tour would be 'made or marred according as you do and *say* the right thing.'⁴³ There is some suggestion that Edward was considered a relatively inexperienced diplomat in need of some guidance. 'He is a remarkably good speaker – tho' of course his speeches are drafted for him he works hard at them & with a good memory he usually knows what he has to say', Stamfordham assured the Governor-General. 'Strictly *entre nous*, he is of rather an obstinate nature but you will, I'm sure, find him delightful' he finished.⁴⁴ Winning personality aside, Edward's diplomacy could not be entirely relied upon. Foreshadowing the British government's later concerns over his tendency to overlook his own role as detached and apolitical head of state, Thornton also noted a tendency in Canada for questions to be asked 'as to whether the Prince of Wales' utterances are to be considered as representing the views and policy of His Majesty's Government.'⁴⁵ Happily, as Amery tactfully remarked, it was hoped that Grigg's drafting hand in the Prince's speeches and correspondence would enable Edward to 'strike the right note everywhere.'⁴⁶

From the Australian perspective

Following Richard White's suggestion that twentieth century outward representations of Australia are consciously constructed to 'suit the perceptions of the outside world', to look closely at the Australian preparations for the 1920 royal tour is to be afforded an

⁴³ Stamfordham, quoted in Windsor, *A king's story*, p. 134. Punctuation in original.

⁴⁴ NLA, MS 696/513-514. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Stamfordham, 26 January 1920.

⁴⁵ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1580/17. Letter to Stamfordham from Thornton, 30 January 1920.

⁴⁶ TNA, T 1/12480. Letter to Austen Chamberlain from Amery, 12 January 1920.

intimate view of the way the nation constructed and promoted its imperial identity.⁴⁷ It is clear that while the tour was initially conceived and facilitated by British political ambitions, this in no way restricted the opportunism of Australian politicians in seizing the prospect for their own political capital. Political commandeering occurred at all levels of the administration in the months before the Prince's arrival. Under the auspices of Munro Ferguson, White held administrative authority over the individual state itineraries, which were themselves arranged by state administrators. In practice, however, personal ambition played a prominent role, and when coupled with geographical distance and limited communications, significant state autonomy and deviation from the official itinerary eventuated.

As Anne Twomey has explained, post-Federation state and federal governments were perpetually in disagreement over the political and communicative functions of the state Governors and Governors-General.⁴⁸ In 1920, the shared administration could not fail to reprise this simmering conflict, so much so that even the site of the Prince's first landing in Australia could not be agreed upon. The first sign of trouble arose over the revival of the well-worn argument over the status of Sydney as opposed to Melbourne, the temporary capital. As the seat of government and the place where the Prince's parents came ashore in 1901, Melbourne was also Munro Ferguson's home. When it was announced that the Prince would arrive at St Kilda pier, the newly-elected New South Wales Labor premier John Storey and the state Governor, Walter Davidson, wrote in outrage directly to the Colonial Office to protest that New South Wales was the 'oldest, most populous [and] wealthiest' state in the country.⁴⁹ This perceived slight

⁴⁷ Richard White, 'The Outsider's Gaze and the Representation of Australia', in Don Grant and Graham Seal (eds.), *Australia in the world: perceptions and possibilities: papers from the "Outside images of Australia" conference, Perth, 1992*, (Perth, W.A.: Black Swan Press, Curtin University of Technology, 1994), pp. 22-28, p. 23.

⁴⁸ For further discussion, see Anne Twomey, *The chameleon crown: the Queen and her Australian governors* (Annandale, N.S.W.: The Federation Press, 2006), pp. 25-43.

⁴⁹ TNA, CO 418/192. Telegram to Milner from Davidson, 9 February 1920.

would be only one of multiple territorial squabbles and determined attempts to vie for representation that dogged every aspect of the itinerary, both in the planning and execution.

More rancour surfaced over the issue of precedence, which was treated with flagrant disregard by state officials. In theory, the Governor-General, as head of state in lieu of the King, followed in turn by the state Governors, took precedence over the Prince himself. To avoid any awkward situation where the star visitor would be forced into a publicly subordinate position, officials decided to simply limit the opportunities for the Prince and his father's representatives to appear in public together as little as possible. Munro Ferguson, for example, skirted around the issue by attaching an aide-de-camp, John Duncan-Hughes, to accompany the Prince's party in his stead. The idea was that the state Governors would also discreetly bow out of appearing in public with the Prince in favour of lesser officials taking the lead. As the next chapter will demonstrate in greater detail, this ruling would prove both impractical and unpopular. Although White provided a helpful table, its usefulness 'appeared to be unknown to the states, all of whom had tables of their own which they were disinclined to depart from', he despaired.⁵⁰ State officials took every opportunity to promote their autonomy in the face of attempts to exert federal influence.

The Australian prime minister William 'Billy' Hughes also appeared oblivious to White's supposed control over the Prince's itinerary. Hughes was transparently determined both to promote the tour as a force of imperial propaganda and appropriate the itinerary for his own purposes in promoting trade and migration connections with Britain. Having previously met Edward during his wartime visits to London, Hughes' first objective was to re-establish the relationship and insinuate himself in almost all arrangements for the tour. This caused Grigg some anxiety; he explained to Munro

⁵⁰ NAA, A6678, R56. Letter to E.J. Russell from White, 6 September 1920.

Ferguson that Lloyd George had raised the issue on no less than three occasions, insisting that Hughes ‘should not be allowed to give the impression in any way that he is showing off the Prince of Wales, to the disadvantage of his political opponents.’⁵¹ Munro Ferguson admitted encountering some difficulty in controlling Hughes’ ambitions. ‘It has not been an easy task’, he complained to the King, as the ‘masterful little prime minister has decided views on all questions and never forgets he is the supreme authority.’⁵² Stamfordham also added his voice to those fearing that the prime minister would use his influence to ‘annex’ the Prince, perceiving a boycott of support by opposing political parties and seeming to ally the royal visitor with one political alliance.⁵³ **Image 8**

There can be no doubt that the ‘masterful’ Hughes entertained all these objectives and more. He had been one of the founding members of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), although his convictions and ambitions took him further away from it over his long political career. Following his election as prime minister in 1915, Hughes’ two wartime attempts to introduce conscription failed, but in doing so divided the electorate over the moral right to civic freedom afforded by the state. Hughes passionately believed Australia should do everything within its power to support the Empire, which he understood would in turn enhance the development of Australia’s local interests and independence. He led the ‘yes’ campaigners, comprising conservative politicians, business groups, protestant churches and some unionists against the ‘no’ voters, including those from within the labour movement, the Catholic clergy and left-wing organisations. The public discontent over the conscription controversy spurred national anxieties of a socialist uprising at a time of rising costs of living and threats to workers’ rights, especially following a major strike in 1917.

⁵¹ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to Munro Ferguson from Grigg, 23 April 1920.

⁵² NLA, MS 696/128. Letter to King George V from Munro Ferguson, undated.

⁵³ NLA, MS 696/513-514. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Stamfordham, 26 January 1920.

The debate also challenged and embittered long-established labour beliefs on the obligations of citizenship and the exercise of power by the state, causing the ALP to adopt a definitive anti-war stance and a large-scale leftward shift of the movement generally.⁵⁴ The Nationalist Party of Australia was formed in 1917 from a merger between the Commonwealth Liberal Party and the National Labour Party, Hughes' pro-conscription defectors from the ALP. Despite winning convincingly at an election in 1919, Hughes struggled to escape the notoriety of his divisive pro-conscription views. However, as Beaumont cautions, it is important to note that his failure to introduce conscription by no means indicates a broader social dissatisfaction with imperialism or a lack of support for Australia's involvement in the conflict.⁵⁵ Instead, she argues, the effect was to 'embed imperial loyalty even more firmly as the dominant discourse' over several decades to come. In the hands of the Nationalists, she explains:

'loyalty' came to mean much more than support for Britain, the war effort and conscription. Entrenching and legitimizing conservative power, 'loyalty' became coded as the essence of political reliability and orthodoxy. In turn, 'disloyalty' became a byword for treason, a label with which the governing elites demonized a multitude of political opponents.⁵⁶

The demonisation of perceived 'disloyalty' is clear in the way particular groups of Australians supposedly holding anti-imperial views were vilified following the confirmation of the Prince's tour. Strident objections from pro-imperial government officials, the British Empire League, the mainstream press and many outspoken individuals increased in volume when the Prince was in New Zealand prior to arriving in Australia, but never really dissipated throughout the tour, each perceived threat experiencing a revival just before the royal party arrived in a new state. As this section, and the following chapter 3 will go on to discuss, in Victoria, supposed Catholic

⁵⁴ Neville Kirk, "'Australians for Australia': The Right, the Labor Party and Contested Loyalties to Nation and Empire in Australia, 1917 to the Early 1930s", *Labour History*, 91 (2006), pp. 95-111, p. 96.

⁵⁵ Beaumont, "'Unitedly we have fought'", p. 404.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 404-05.

‘disloyalty’ was much maligned, while in New South Wales the effusiveness of the welcome of Storey’s Labor government could apparently not be trusted. In Western Australia, the strength of the trade union and nationalist body, along with recent history of dockside riots was cause for imperialist concern. South Australia, supposedly the most ‘British’ of the former colonies, was also home to some of the most vocal advocates for independent governance. Doubt was cast over parts of Tasmania as a labour movement stronghold. Worse of all was Queensland, with its not insignificant population of menacing socialist and workers lobbyists led by a sympathetic government.

First to erupt was the debate over the supposed dissent of Catholic communities. At the beginning of the war, most Australians, including Catholics, had supported Australia’s involvement in the conflict.⁵⁷ Even beforehand, Catholic groups were accepting of the monarch, as in the case of the 1867 royal tour when schools and communities participated without prejudice in the celebrations.⁵⁸ However, as Brenda Niall has shown, Irish-Australian feeling grew more distinct and radicalised after 1916, when anti-British sentiment surged following the British government’s violent repression of the Easter Rising rebellion in Dublin.⁵⁹ One of Hughes’ most vociferous detractors in Victoria was prominent Irish Catholic Daniel Mannix, the Archbishop of Melbourne, who had been among the most public opponents of conscription. The divide between Mannix, his significant body of mostly working-class Irish-Australian followers and the pro-imperialist population grew following the war.⁶⁰ It seems clear that the Catholic community held no particular animosity towards the Prince himself,

⁵⁷ Brenda Niall, *Mannix* (Melbourne, Vic.: Text Publishing, 2015), p. 84.

⁵⁸ Richard Davis, ‘Loyalism in Australasia, 1788-1868’, in Allan Blackstock and Frank O’Gorman (eds.), *Loyalism and the formation of the British World, 1775-1914* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 223-40, p. 239.

⁵⁹ Niall, *Mannix*, p. 85.

⁶⁰ The Catholic community comprised 22 per cent of the population at the time. Beaumont, “‘Unitedly we have fought’”, p. 404.

but also that they suffered a campaign of anti-Catholic sentiment waged in the mainstream press in the months before the Prince's arrival. The *Catholic Press*, for example, perceived the 'angry terror' with which loyalists responded to the 'Catholic question', ever associated in Australia with the 'Irish question.'⁶¹

Hughes' manifest support of the imperial agenda inherent in the Prince's visit sparked lively condemnation from Mannix. Nonetheless, rather than opposing the Prince's visit as a celebration of imperialism *per se*, Catholic dissent was in reality entirely moderate, their major objection being the obsequious and undemocratic manner in which the government, conservative press and large sections of the public responded to the arrival. In many ways, they chose to perceive the Prince instead through his democratic and progressive qualities; a welcome visitor, but nonetheless a man the same as any other. Taking what seems a generous stance given the British government's attitude to Irish independence in 1920, the community hoped that the Prince's visit would be enacted as the neutral visit of a representative of one free country to another, and not as the symbol of 'a Junker Government' denying to Ireland 'the rights for which Australia made such immense sacrifices in blood and money.'⁶² Following the confirmation, the *Catholic Press* newspaper made its position clear, stating:

The dreadful slobber about the Prince of Wales ... threatens to make that estimable young man intensely unpopular ... Australians are entitled to see and welcome a modest youth who cannot, through the fortune of birth, help the prominence into which fate has pitchforked him ... there is no need to make people believe that kings and princes who succeed by hereditary right are just the persons who would be elected to the jobs if the public had a voice in the matter. Let the Prince of Wales go through Australia receiving the respect due to his rank, and kept free from the vulgar advertising stunts with which a certain class of exploiters are making us familiar.⁶³

⁶¹ 'SHOCKING DISLOYALTY', *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 17 June 1920, p. 26.

⁶² 'THE COMING OF THE PRINCE', *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 15 April 1920, p. 26.

⁶³ 'SOCIAL NEWS AND GOSSIP', *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 5 February 1920, p. 12.

In was in this spirit that Mannix, deeply scornful of all the ‘gush and nonsense’, controversially urged Melbournians to show some sanity beyond the ‘Princeitis’ that seemed to have taken over the city.⁶⁴ *The Catholic Press* also expressed disgust over the elaborate suggestions for expensive clothing and social niceties that appeared in conservative newspapers.⁶⁵ The objections largely bypassed the Prince, himself perceived as a ‘modest, sensible young man.’⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the debate raged, culminating in the *Brisbane Telegraph*’s hysterical account of Mannix’ ‘disloyalists’ publicly protesting in the streets of Melbourne when Edward was in New Zealand before arriving in Australia.⁶⁷ The fervour largely dissipated following the Archbishop’s departure for an extended overseas tour just before the Prince’s arrival. Aided by the redemptive invitation of certain Catholic representatives to participate in the tour, the charge of disloyalty seems to have been largely manifest in the prejudices and fears of conservative commentators during the planning stages, rather than in the Catholic community itself.

The demonisation of any opposition to imperialism, however mild, also extended to other groups including the major opposing political party, both at state and federal level. In April, the ALP’s Albert Gardiner made a point of assuring the Senate that the Prince was ‘assured of as loyal a welcome at the hands of Labour [sic] in New South Wales as if any other Government were in office.’⁶⁸ He claimed that long-standing allegations in the press that Labor supporters were ‘disloyalists, pro Germans, Sinn Feiners, and I.W.W. men’ were nothing more than propaganda employed by the

⁶⁴ ‘ARCHBISHOP MANNIX AND THE PRINCE’, *The Mercury*, Hobart, Tas., 3 May 1920, p. 5.

⁶⁵ ‘SOCIAL NEWS AND GOSSIP’, *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 5 February 1920, p. 12.

⁶⁶ ‘SHOCKING DISLOYALTY’, *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 17 June 1920, p. 26.

⁶⁷ ‘THE PRINCE IN AUSTRALIA’, *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Qld., 29 May 1920, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Parliament of Australia, Senate, ‘Debates’, 20 April 1920, p. 1099.

Nationalists as ‘dope for their silly followers.’⁶⁹ There can be no doubt that during the 1920s, conservative naysayers who decried Labor’s position on ‘loyalty’ exposed the First World War’s legacy of uncertainty over Australia’s defensive obligations to Britain. As James Curran explains in his work on John Curtin, a young Labor luminary who would go on to govern as ALP leader, the trauma of the war and its political repercussions could do nothing but confirm for Labor supporters their existing suspicion of symbols of imperial authority and disgust for those who revelled in the royal limelight.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, the attitude of the top tier of federal Labor politicians to the royal visit may be summarised as one of tolerance, even kindness, towards the royal visitor, with one important caveat. Edward would be feted within an understanding that the Empire would continue to function for the greater good of the Dominions, and its figureheads would be afforded no more respect than entitled to humanity as a whole. Curtin, for example, expressed the view that the royals should understand that their legitimacy existed only ‘by popular consent’, and it would be wise to respect the autonomy of the Dominions accordingly.⁷¹ Frank Tudor, the leader of the Opposition who had become leader of the ALP in 1916 following Hughes’ departure, was notably reticent on the topic in the House of Representatives. However, his colleague William Maloney could not help but remark on the tour as a ‘useless waste of money.’ He objected to reports of eight hours of tuition offered to enable naval soldiers to give a rousing rendition of ‘Hip! Hip! Hurrah’ in preparation for the visit (and ‘not the good Australian “Hooray.” It must be “Hip! Hip! Hurrah”.’)⁷² Much like the attitudes of

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ James Curran, *Curtin’s empire* (Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 29-33.

⁷¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷² Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 20 May 1920, p. 2333.

Catholic community, Labor supporters registered their distaste for activities that perpetuated social inequalities.

Despite this, the labour movement was at this time most sharply conscious of its need to position itself within the Empire, and advance political capital and recognition on the back of the hoped-for success of the tour. Imperialism could be employed as a political mechanism conducive to the advancement of the Australian nationalist agenda. This seems to have been the case with at least some of Tudor's state colleagues, most notably Storey who held the view that 'any attempt at severance from the British Empire would be a calamity.'⁷³ Elsewhere, James Reed, the President of the Western Australian Goldfields National Labor Party also asserted that any insult to the Prince jeopardised 'the bond of union, which apart from sentimental reasons, [is] in the interests of Australia to consolidate.'⁷⁴

Reed's view could not be said to be shared by the majority of state and municipal labour supporters and politicians. Given the nation's precarious post-war finances, many voiced dismay as to the generous allocation of federal and state public monies to the visit, headed by the symbol of what was undeniably a thoroughly capitalist institution. In Parliament, Hughes had stated airily that extravagance would not be permitted and that the government 'are relying upon the loyalty and enthusiasm of the people to make the reception and welcome to His Royal Highness all that it should be.'⁷⁵ However, for many of his state colleagues it was a given that they would oppose the visit on the principle that the money should be better spent elsewhere. The Victorian branch of the ALP registered their strong disapproval of the 'lavish expenditure' and similar sentiments were repeated in the goldfields town of Boulder,

⁷³ 'LABOR AND LOYALTY', *The Richmond River Express and Casino Kyogle Advertiser* N.S.W., 17 December 1920, p. 5.

⁷⁴ '7H O.L.P. AND THE PRINCE'S VISIT', *The Daily News*, Perth, W.A., 4 May 1920, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 29 April 1920, p. 1613.

Western Australia, among others.⁷⁶ Percy Brookfield, a radical politician from Broken Hill, New South Wales, decried the spending by officials of public monies on ‘puerile frivolities’ to aid the ‘glorification of a youth to whom they would not give a saveloy but for his royal descent.’⁷⁷ ‘We are WASTING ENORMOUS SUMS...in the idolatrous worship of an amiable, commonplace youth’ agreed Labor politician Francis Cotton in the *Australian Worker*.⁷⁸

The economic woes and inflation that continued well after the workers’ strike of 1917 were among the prominent symptoms of the widespread social disillusionment that prevailed after Australia’s catastrophic losses became known after 1918. As Connors argues, initial feelings of pride in the Empire’s achievement could not fail to be eroded closer to home by the public unhappiness of returned soldiers and the grief of bereaved families.⁷⁹ An additional 12,000 Australians died from the influenza epidemic that returned home with the troops.⁸⁰ There were doubtless many for whom the imperial connection could only be synonymous with grief and devastation. It was in this vein that in June 1920 Cotton described how:

Our own land, although spared the actual ravages of war, has still its own quota of human misery. It is burdened with an intolerable load of debt, and is famished by drought. Hunger and cold are here, as elsewhere, grim realities, as the pitiful stories told by mothers who are fighting a losing battle with the wolf at the door abundantly testify.⁸¹

The war and its aftermath had energised the labour movement and radical politics around the world. As Murphy explains, widespread discontent across continental Europe provided abundant opportunities for revolutionary activities, with

⁷⁶ ‘PRINCE OF WALES’ VISIT’, *Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, Tas., 23 March 1920, p. 2; ‘7H O.L.P. AND THE PRINCE’S VISIT’, *The Daily News*, Perth, W.A., 4 May 1920, p. 3.

⁷⁷ ‘THE PRINCE’S VISIT’, *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 6 May 1920, p. 19.

⁷⁸ ‘A SENSELESS SATURNALIA’, *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 3 June 1920, p. 7.

⁷⁹ Connors, *Royal visits to Australia*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ ‘A SENSELESS SATURNALIA’, *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 3 June 1920, p. 7.

many members of the British Establishment fearing this to be an ‘insurrectionary movement that would eventually undermine the established order at home and within the Empire.’⁸² The threat became increasingly evident following the Irish uprising of 1916 when republican members of Sinn Féin established their own Free State assembly independent of Westminster.⁸³ The fortunes of the British monarchy were thrown into further turmoil following the bloody overthrow of the tsarist autocracy during the Russian revolutions of 1917. Socialism gained ever-increasing traction across the country, giving rise to conservative fears of a Bolshevik-style revolution among the workers.⁸⁴ Within this context, the Colonial Office’s fears for the continuity of economic and sentimental relations with Britain and the validity of a royal family were justified.

The turbulence of this social context helps to explain why news of the Prince’s visit received such a cynical reaction in many quarters. In April 1920, the outspoken clergyman and pacifist the Rev. Albert Rivett in the Sydney *Australian Worker* correctly guessed at the Colonial Office’s hopes that the visit would create a ‘psychology favourable to militarism.’⁸⁵ There seems no doubt that the tour’s administration reflects a sense of Australia’s potential future vulnerabilities in matters of defence. In keeping with Grigg’s instructions as to the visibility of soldiers and sailors, naval and military rhetoric and glorification dominated the itinerary. The strategic use of Australia’s best harbour arrival points and the frequency of Australian naval escorts, parades and reviews on the program were intended to convey the comfortable co-existence of domestic and imperial security prerogatives.

⁸² Murphy, *Monarchy and the end of empire*, p. 16.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Connors, *Royal visits to Australia*, p. 45.

⁸⁵ ‘THE RED FLAG AND THE PRINCE’, *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 22 April 1920, p. 5.

However, in 1920 the maintenance of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) continued to divide imperial interests. Australia had established an autonomous naval branch of its domestic defence force in 1913 although these ships were allocated to the British Royal Navy during the First World War.⁸⁶ After the war, the winning Powers hoped to limit the spread of rearmament in the Pacific, and several regions were annexed for Australian or British administration by the League of Nations. As part of the British Empire, Australia's plans for the RAN were expected to accord with Britain's peace negotiations and stance on limiting a future arms race, which would ultimately lead to the Washington Treaties of the early 1920s. In a letter to Munro Ferguson, Walter Long, the British Lord of the Admiralty, conceded that it was natural that Australia should 'be attracted by the idea of possessing their own battleships, their own Navy', but perceived this only within the capacity of rendering 'splendid assistance to an Empire Navy' in the form of floating docks, training, stores and munitions.⁸⁷ Halsey agreed that the Australian politicians should stop playing 'ducks and drakes' with their 'absolutely effete' fleet, and he hoped some of his stern words to this effect had 'shaken them quite a lot.'⁸⁸

These views apparently fell on deaf ears. Hughes' National Party government believed that Australia's vulnerable imperial interests could be best preserved by a domestic defence strategy rather than trusting only in Britain's protection. Pre-war, Japan's domestic naval power had been perceived as a threat to Australian interests in the Pacific. The Anglo-Japanese Naval Treaty of 1902 and its renewal in 1905 were seen to expand Britain's sphere of maritime control. The Australian government, trusting that Britain would protect the country if attacked, did not initially develop a

⁸⁶ Stewart Firth and Jeanette Hoorn, 'From Empire Day to Cracker Night', in David Walker and Peter Spearritt (eds.), *Australian popular culture* (Sydney, N.S.W.: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), pp. 17-38, p. 19.

⁸⁷ NLA, MS 696/1908. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Long, 5 July 1920.

⁸⁸ NLA, MFM M1179, Lionel Halsey papers. Letter to 'Mother' from Halsey, 14 June 1920.

national naval squadron nor improve its defences, instead contributing funds to the cost of the Royal Navy. This generated much controversial scrutiny of the government's conflicted loyalties, resulting in a six-fold increase in expenditure on defence between 1905 and 1913.⁸⁹

In the early stages, therefore, the itinerary had at the prime minister's suggestion also included a naval expedition to Rabaul, an Australian territory in New Guinea delegated that year as a League of Nations mandate. The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force's possession of this and other neighbouring islands in September 1914 had marked one of the most significant moments of the war in the Pacific. Although initially this was incorporated with little dissent, half way through the tour Grigg began to realise that the other Powers might take a dim view of a 'naval and parliamentary demonstration' crafted by Hughes to aggrandise Australia's supposedly modest naval presence in the Pacific.⁹⁰

Although the Rabaul section was later excised from the itinerary, the contradiction between British and Australian naval interests continued to dominate. Long hoped that what he referred to as 'the ultimate solution of the great problem of Imperial Defence' could be effected by the 'great feeling of imperialist patriotism' following the war, and most helpfully enhanced by the Prince's visit.⁹¹ The triumph of naval prowess over distant foes can be seen to be personified in the Prince. It was most fitting, remarked one souvenir pamphlet prepared for the New South Wales section of the tour, how the 'Sailor Prince' should arrive in Australia in H.M.S. *Renown*, a refurbished battleship. His training in the navy, the author asserted, set him apart from 'all braggart weakling princes' and established 'the sturdy quality of him' and 'whatever

⁸⁹ For further discussion, see Donald Horne, *Billy Hughes* (Melbourne, Vic.: Bookman Press, 2000), pp. 77-78.

⁹⁰ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/49. Letter to Stamfordham from Grigg, 7 July 1920.

⁹¹ NLA, MS 696/1908-09. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Long, 5 July 1920.

counts for manhood and good omen.’⁹² This serves again to demonstrate how observers confidently aligned perceptions of the Prince’s supposed affable leadership and masculine attributes with concerns that most preoccupied Australia at the time.

As well as the question of expense and the dubious co-existence of military obligation and loyalty, dissenters found other objectionable aspects to the tour’s arrangements. Labor’s social reform agenda strongly opposed the class distinctions inherent in the granting of imperial honours and other awards. A powerful subset of the movement’s attitude to Britishness was a deep-seated disdain for pretension and genuflection to officialdom that was so offensive to Australia’s egalitarian and democratic ethos. *The Worker*, for example, anticipated an ‘orgy of imperial gush and snobbish adulation’ by conservatives, and the ‘lime-lighting sycophants ... of capitalistic organisations’ who hoped to gain a title following the visit.⁹³ These genuflectors served to undermine the originality of Australian political and social philosophy and perpetuate the inequalities of officialdom in the new world.

The labour movement acted upon this sense of disgust in two ways. Firstly, many resolved that, as the visit was inevitable, the most appropriate reaction was to welcome the Prince, but on their own terms, and in a manner distinct from that of their sycophantic political enemies. Despite the uncertainty over the institution he was held to represent, Edward was merely a man, and a young and inexperienced one at that. This view is best encapsulated by the South Australian *Border Chronicle*, who later explained that:

To him and his family there is undoubtedly a good deal of personal good feeling among the peoples of the Empire ... but it is as well for the Australian with his cynicism and his well-developed sense of humor [sic], not to fall into the terror of thinking that the Anglo-

⁹² Unknown author, *Naval Souvenir: royal visit to Sydney 1920*. Item held within 3804278, Royal Visits - 1920 - Prince of Wales (NSW), Australian ephemera collection (Programs and invitations).

⁹³ ‘A COMING ORGY’, *Worker*, Brisbane, Qld., 22 January 1920, p. 19.

Saxon race as a whole any longer worships kings or kings' sons ... but rather worships itself and its institutions in paying tribute to those who personify those institutions and is no doubt prepared ... to put on one side all things and men and offices that stand in the way of its constitutional development.⁹⁴

Many radical commentators held the view of Brisbane socialist Jack Roche that the Prince should be afforded pity, forced as he was to 'act as a channel through which will be poured streams of verbal slobber and lying platitudes.'⁹⁵ 'No one entertains an unkind feeling towards the Prince. If anything only sympathy is felt for him ... he has become part and parcel of a system' agreed Rivett.⁹⁶ Boote went so far as to deny Edward any political agency of his own, remarking how he could not 'possibly have any ulterior design of State ... the Prince is only an instrument in the hands of the British ruling class.'⁹⁷ Others made a point of denying 'any feeling of disrespect' or any 'personal feeling whatever towards the Prince.'⁹⁸ This willingness to view this 'sprig of royalty' as not consciously aligned with the interests of one particular system, was to prove Edward's greatest asset during the tour.⁹⁹

As an alternative, some members of the labour movement decided to avoid any participation. Although anticipating the charge of disloyalty that must surely eventuate, some began to ponder the idea of a boycott following the confirmation of the tour. Delegates of 77 New South Wales trade unions, for example, agreed that they would have nothing to do with celebrations or events concerning the 'visit of a certain young man.'¹⁰⁰ In Kempsey, New South Wales, members of the One Big Union ruled that they would not allow their children to participate in the multitude of demonstrations by

⁹⁴ 'THE PRINCE AND LOYALTY', *Border Chronicle* Bordertown, S.A., 9 July 1920, p. 2.

⁹⁵ 'ACID DROPS', *The International Socialist*, Sydney, N.S.W., 10 January 1920, p. 4.

⁹⁶ 'THE RED FLAG AND THE PRINCE', *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 22 April 1920, p. 5.

⁹⁷ 'THE PRINCE'S VISIT', *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 15 April 1920, p. 3.

⁹⁸ 'PRINCE OF WALES', *Riverine Herald*, Echuca, Vic., 18 March 1920, p. 2; 'THE ROYAL VISIT', *Warwick Daily News*, Qld., 14 May 1920, p. 6.

⁹⁹ 'THE PRINCE'S VISIT', *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 6 May 1920, p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ 'THE RED FLAG AND THE PRINCE', *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 22 April 1920, p. 5.

schools that were arranged to in honour of the ‘young parasite from overseas.’¹⁰¹ The Melbourne Trades Hall Council also requested that unionists ‘refuse to permit their children to participate’ in any function.¹⁰² Likewise the Bendigo branch of the ALP stated that its members should refuse to take their children from school on the day of Edward’s visit.¹⁰³

Inevitably, reports were received with dismay by pro-imperialists. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, this reflects the emphasis placed on Australia’s younger generations in perpetuating affection for the royals and to the Empire. As the trade unionists and labour movement supporters were well-aware, the dedication of the next generation of imperialists was central to the dominant political ideology. The Rev. Charles Forscutt of Bathurst, New South Wales, for example, was greatly perturbed that ‘the red ragers’ were raising the next generation ‘to be disloyal, to cry out for a republic, and to influence others against King and country.’¹⁰⁴

Other public responses were more in sympathy with Tudor and Storey, in adopting a moderately opportunistic attitude to the potential benefits the visit might bring. In her poem musing over Australia’s divided response to the visit, Catholic nurse Agnes Macready of Sydney argued the changing fortunes of the old world and the new allowed for Australia to greet the Prince as a modern exemplar and on an equitable and mutually beneficial basis. She questioned:

But why should we punish ‘the boy’ for ill-deeds going before?
Let us rise up to the heights, and judge with an open mind ...

Thrones are tottering fast, crowns are lying in pawn
Kings step by in the dark. Queens wait sad for the dawn ...

¹⁰¹ ‘LABOUR AND THE PRINCE’, *The Macleay Chronicle*, Kempsey, N.S.W., 21 April 1920, p. 2.

¹⁰² ‘PRINCE OF WALES’, *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 19 March 1920, p. 7.

¹⁰³ ‘PRINCE OF WALES’, *Riverine Herald*, Echuca, Vic., 18 March 1920, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ ‘COMING OF THE PRINCE’, *Western Champion*, Parkes, N.S.W., 17 June 1920, p. 23.

We, who Imperial ties, Imperial claims, disown,
Welcome the Prince, at morn, as if he were “one of our own.”¹⁰⁵

Others were quick to seize on the positive commercial opportunities offered by the publicity surrounding a tour. Despite labour’s objections, the more evident truth was that the manufacture of electric illuminations, arches and grandstands, and the sale of souvenirs and other goods during the visit did offer some short-term employment or a boost in earnings to significant number of people. Dress-makers, tailors, as well as the builders, painters and carpenters involved in reviving public spaces would all take a share. Crowds had to be fed locally, transported and provided with sleeping options. The provision of cars and trained horses was central to the pageantry.¹⁰⁶ Night-time illuminations offered the chance to prolong the spectacle long after the visitor had passed by, and would encourage regional visitors to stay overnight and locals to venture into the city centre after dark.

As well as an increase in revenue, the tour also offered some unusual commercial and promotional opportunities. Administrators were deluged by a range of offers of goods and services from Australian-made varnish for the Prince’s carriage, a performance of the ‘very Australian’ comedy ‘The Boss Cockie’ (‘a play of the real outback in the real Queensland’), to ‘excellent fire portraits of any celebrities you may desire.’¹⁰⁷ As will be discussed in the following chapter, still others were alive to the evident possibilities the tour offered as a vehicle to promote a multitude of local strategic agendas. John Hoare, the mayor of Cairns, eagerly anticipated that a visit could only attract attention from the ‘outside world’ to the district’s ‘vastly rich and

¹⁰⁵ ‘Here, There and Everywhere’, *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 29 April 1920, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Happily for White, this provided the opportunity to encounter ‘one of the best mares I have ever had the pleasure of sitting behind.’ NAA, A6678, R29/2. Letter to James Moore and Sons from White, 9 July 1920.

¹⁰⁷ NAA, A6678/R4/1/9 TO R4/1/30. Letter to Fihelly from R. Bedford, 20 May 1920; NAA, A2, 1920/1113 PART 26. Letter to Hughes from W. Docker, 27 May 1920 and letter to Prime Minister’s Secretary from J. Wells, 12 January 1920.

underdeveloped agricultural pastoral mining resources which only await [a] tide of British migrants.’¹⁰⁸

There were other positive social benefits, most closely allied with what Kirby has called ‘the deep wellspring of human need for the ceremonies that mark important occasions in life.’¹⁰⁹ Many Australians were also eager for a nation-wide celebration to break the monotony and depression of post-war life. Due to the outbreak of influenza, Australia had not had a mass peace celebration in 1918 or 1919, and so for many this offered the welcome opportunity for a public festivities.¹¹⁰ Such novelty gave attendees the chance to meet with friends to participate in a nationally observed event that would surely become part of their hometown or city’s historical narrative.

The tour’s administration reflects a seemingly genuine eagerness to craft a truly democratic celebration for those from all walks of life to enjoy. Plans for a naval pageant to be held at Government House in Sydney were abandoned as White argued that it would ‘only be seen by a few and not by the multitude.’¹¹¹ The administrators hoped for large crowds at all points of the itinerary. In anticipation, the Sydney organisers issued a pamphlet for the perusal of all would-be attendees that informed them of the behaviour expected. Evidently expecting a riot, this warned royal observers to ‘refrain from any action calculated to cause panic or other danger.’¹¹² The throwing of confetti was ‘strictly prohibited’, it continued, as was the ‘waving of flags, handkerchiefs or other articles’ in the presence of horses. The public was particularly cautioned not to attempt to move locations in order to view the royal progress twice, but were directed in no uncertain terms to return by the nearest route straight home. Despite

¹⁰⁸ NAA, A6678/R4/1/5 TO R4/1/7. Telegram to Hughes from Hoare, 25 February 1920.

¹⁰⁹ Kirby, *Reflections on Constitutional Monarchy*, p. 75.

¹¹⁰ However, other public ceremonies had taken place, such as the marking of an ‘Anzac Day’ since 1916.

¹¹¹ NAA, A11052, 8. Letter to B. Clifford from White, 10 April 1920.

¹¹² Unknown author, *Visit of the Prince of Wales to New South Wales: this concerns you!* Item held within 3804278, Royal Visits - 1920 - Prince of Wales (NSW), Australian ephemera collection (Programs and invitations).

the stern admonitions, politicians knew that the presence of crowds attending the Prince's tour ensured its best chance of success. Edwin Kerby, a member of Hughes' party, saw the visit as a means to mobilise Australians in support of imperialism, describing it as 'the means of bringing all sections of the community together to show their loyalty to Throne and Empire.'¹¹³

At the federal level in any case, it seems that, rather than being simply encouraged to gather together, there was something of an obligation to attend these supposedly spontaneous community demonstrations of loyalty. In the first instance, the government agreed to a recess of Parliament, so that all members 'irrespective of party' might attend the 'spirit of welcome' afforded to the Prince's arrival in Melbourne.¹¹⁴ The enforced attendance of parliamentarians is not too surprising perhaps, but what does underscore the mandatory nature of participation was Hughes' decision in mid-May to allocate one day's public holiday pay, firstly to all other federal public servants.¹¹⁵ A few days later, following urging from the Opposition, he agreed that returned servicemen were also to be paid extra monies to cover the public holiday by the Repatriation Department, and apprentices, many of whom were also veterans, were to receive payment for a day away from their trade school training.¹¹⁶ Officials must have almost immediately begun to question the wisdom of this decision, as in no time at all the idea caught on and so it began that many Australian employees commenced spirited negotiations in search of a paid day off.

If given the choice, it is assumed most Australian workers would likely chose to work rather than miss out on pay. Employees of the clothing trades in Perth, for example, politely informed their union that due to the 'high costs of living and the small

¹¹³ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 26 February 1920, pp. 55-56.

¹¹⁴ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 10 March 1920, p. 249.

¹¹⁵ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 18 May 1920, p. 2147.

¹¹⁶ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 20 May 1920, p. 2416.

wage' afforded to them, they would rather work on the day of the Prince's arrival.¹¹⁷ Herein lay the dilemma. If a day's pay was forthcoming, there was little to prevent people from instead gathering alongside their community to enjoy the spectacle. Employers had almost no choice but to grant a paid holiday to their workers or risk outrage if other local businesses or institutions set a precedent.¹¹⁸ Those who did have to work, such as train or tram workers, demanded double pay.¹¹⁹ What with the loss sustained by the lack of work completed in industry and services plus the extra costs of overtime, the cost to the state of one day day's holiday must have been considerable.

Of course, as previously discussed, some Australians intended to avoid the event whether they were paid or not and others saw only commercial gain by working during the celebrations. However, it must be said that knowledge of the large numbers of Australians across the country enjoying some sort of financial recompense does lend a new cynical perspective on the motivations of the great crowds who attended the tour. The ALP's James Mathews' prescient interpretation of Hughes' favourable decision on public holiday pay as demanding of 'compulsory loyalty' can be usefully considered in the discussion of the reality of the tour in the following chapter.¹²⁰

Yet for all the supposed democracy of the rituals, the existence of an implicit code of patriotic behaviour for those participating in this people's celebration is also evident. There was a distinct effort made by organisers to attempt to swell the ranks of the more responsible type of participant. The Australian administrators were universally in agreement with Grigg's instructions regarding the tour's focus on popular engagement, and in presenting the Prince as a friend of the Diggers. Public perceptions of the treatment of returned soldiers were of critical importance to both the British and

¹¹⁷ 'UNPAID HOLIDAY DECLINED', *The West Australian*, Perth, W.A., 25 June 1920, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ 'HALF A DAY', *The Newcastle Sun*, N.S.W., 30 July 1920, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ 'HOLIDAY FOR PRINCE'S ARRIVAL', *Border Watch*, Mount Gambier, S.A., 25 June 1920, p. 3.

¹²⁰ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 11 May 1920, p. 1931.

Australian governments, and demonstrated the revered yet complex position of these men in society immediately after their return. Here, too, lay the potential for supposed ‘disloyalty.’ Neville Kirk, for example, has described how inter-war anti-British sentiment was fuelled by reports of the ‘incompetence, snobbery and indifference’ displayed to Anzac soldiers by British officers.¹²¹

It was within the context of this reverence for the Digger that Grigg almost made a serious misjudgement in the management of the itinerary. After receiving an overwhelming level of interest from communities before and during the tour, he misguidedly attempted at a late stage to cancel all pre-arranged special functions for returned servicemen. It was impossible to accept just one or two invitations, he explained, and the sheer volume of invitations received was such that it was impossible to avoid creating ‘a feeling of unfairness and dissatisfaction’ among those who were rejected.¹²² This decision met with a stern warning from Munro Ferguson. ‘Returned soldiers regard their welcome as a principal feature of Prince’s visit’, he cautioned, fearing the decision to rely solely on impersonal mass parades and receptions as a means for veterans to see the Prince ‘would invite clamour and be most unpopular.’¹²³

The celebration of the Prince as a symbol of peace and military prowess dominated, but also allowed for a more nuanced acknowledgment of the personal cost of the conflict. While parades of healthy ex-servicemen could be arranged without too much logistical difficulty, there was a feeling that the Prince also ought to bear witness to the damage the war had wrought on the bodies of Australian men. The Victorian tour organiser fought for the right of incapacitated and disabled soldiers from the local Anzac hostel and Caulfield Military Hospital to participate in the local celebrations,

¹²¹ Kirk, “‘Australians for Australia’”, p. 96.

¹²² NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Grigg, 14 May 1920.

¹²³ NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Grigg from Munro Ferguson, 14 May 1920.

suggesting that the patients could be wheeled in their beds to a designated area.¹²⁴

Returned soldiers in uniform, were along with everyday spectators in many places entitled to free train travel to city centres from outlying regional areas.¹²⁵ Free or cheap accommodation was arranged for returned men near to the city centres.¹²⁶ More generally, accommodation for visitors was arranged via reputable organisations set up specifically to regulate the influx, prevent inflated costs by proprietors and secure an advance deposit.¹²⁷

Wherever possible, less suitable ‘disloyal’ groups thought to be dabbling in any form of radical or sectarian activity were simply excised from the route taken. In a country as large as Australia, this was a relatively straightforward and efficient means of shaping the popular reception of the tour to the administrators’ satisfaction. Munro Ferguson kept Grigg and the Colonial Office well-appraised of the potential tensions in Australian society. For example, after he had received reports of ‘hot-beds of extremists’, the northern stretches of the itinerary were curtailed at Maryborough, Queensland, with the official excuse being offered that it was unsafe for H.M.S *Renown* to proceed inside the Great Barrier Reef.¹²⁸ As always, the extremists were a nebulous group, consisting of parts of the Irish community, many employed in the railways, policing and other services, as well as ‘aliens’ (i.e. non-citizens), and members of the Industrial Workers of the World, a Communist organisation that had been banned during the war.¹²⁹

These exclusions were easy enough to enforce in a state the size of Queensland without much comment. However, sometimes the views of hosts and visitors clashed

¹²⁴ NAA, A6678, R66. Letter to White from S. Whitehead, 19 April 1920 and letter to Whitehead from White, 23 April 1920.

¹²⁵ NAA, A6678, R77. Letter to Brigadier-General Brand from F. Short, 4 May 1920.

¹²⁶ ‘ACCOMMODATION FOR SOLDIERS’, *The Age*, Melbourne, Vic., 30 April 1920, p. 9.

¹²⁷ ‘PRINCE OF WALES’ VISIT’, *Daily Herald*, Adelaide, S.A., 20 April 1920, p. 4.

¹²⁸ NLA, MS 696/360 Letter to Stamfordham from Munro Ferguson, 8 March 1920.

¹²⁹ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to Milner from Munro Ferguson, 10 January 1920.

and the resulting excuses were revealed for what they were. During the planning of the Tasmanian section, Grigg discovered that the government led by Nationalist Premier Walter Lee had purposefully excluded the northern western Labor-voting region from the itinerary by neglecting to arrange transport for locals and directing the royal progress along the central belt. ‘The Tasmanian government is not playing the game ... it is so important for the Prince of Wales to avoid being involved in unfairness of this kind’, he pleaded.¹³⁰ Similarly, the notion of the ship arriving in Western Australia at the international port at Fremantle too was struck from the early plans, likely due to the violent confrontation between waterside workers, some of them soldiers, and police in May 1919. When it became known that H.M.S *Renown* would dock instead at the natural harbour at Albany, Fremantle workers responded with indignation to the explanation offered that their modern port was not deep enough to accommodate the battleship.¹³¹

Other influences were unabashedly identified as unfavourable. Some members of the public were horrified at the selection of controversial public officials as hosts. For example, as the Queensland Premier Edward Theodore was scheduled to be in England during the visit, his deputy, prominent anti-conscriptionist John Fihelly along with Lieutenant-Governor William Lennon, were appointed to act as hosts in his absence. These men were avowed Irish republican sympathisers, had protested against conscription during the war, and were perceived as strongly anti-imperialist.¹³² In 1916, Fihelly had spoken out against the ‘bungling and ineptitude of British military

¹³⁰ NAA, A11052, 8. Telegram to White from Grigg, 11 July 1920.

¹³¹ TNA, ADM 116/1871. Letter to Secretary, Fremantle Harbour Trust, from A.J. Lea Holt, 6 July 1920.

¹³² Rodney Sullivan, ‘Lennon, William (1849-1938)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lennon-william-7172/text12393>>, accessed 11 May 2014; Betty Crouchley, ‘Fihelly, John Arthur (1882-1945)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fihelly-john-arthur-6169/text10597>>, accessed 11 May 2014.

chieftains.¹³³ Four years later ‘party and religious feeling run high in Queensland’, Munro Ferguson told Milner, and ‘much bitterness has been aroused by the attitude of the Government’ during the war.¹³⁴

The Queensland judge Pope Cooper wrote anxiously of this as a ‘trap designed to threaten the safety of, or embarrass the Prince, or to whitewash these two Sinn Féin sympathisers by enabling them to offer him the hospitality of the state.’¹³⁵ Similarly, Arthur Whittingham, the President of the ‘Queensland Club’, wrote in agitation to White, torn over his wish to offer official hospitality to the Prince but not to Fihelly and Lennon. These men would ‘not at all be acceptable as visitors to the Club’, he complained, and if it were compulsory to invite them ‘it will considerably affect not only the attendance but also the harmony of the evening.’¹³⁶

Other exclusions were more subtle. The Prince was seen as a thorough modern racial protector who served to unify and embody these elements most prized by the organisers, and the chance, as in McKenna’s words, to ‘bask in race pride.’¹³⁷ In terms of invitations issued, or the organisation of culturally specific activities, the administration largely neglected the allegiance of major groups of non-British heritage such as Chinese Australians, and particularly German Australians.¹³⁸ Although as discussed above, the Catholic community were vilified for their supposed disloyalty from conservative quarters, this does not seem to have extended to either their

¹³³ Quoted in Raymond Evans, *Loyalty and disloyalty: social conflict on the Queensland homefront, 1914-18* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p. 39.

¹³⁴ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to Milner from Munro Ferguson, 10 January 1920.

¹³⁵ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to Munro Ferguson from Cooper, 6 January 1920.

¹³⁶ NAA, A6678/R4/1/9 TO R4/1/30. Letter to White from Whittingham, 28 April 1920.

¹³⁷ McKenna, ‘Monarchy: From Reverence to Indifference’, p. 277.

¹³⁸ A ceremonial arch dedicated to the Prince by Sydney’s ‘Chinese Citizens’ can be glimpsed in *Through Australia with the Prince of Wales*, (1920) (dir. Bert Ive, Cinema and Photographic Branch, Department of Home and Territories, Commonwealth of Australia), item 9381, NFSA. This suggests that individual communities felt able to demonstrate their loyalty outside of the official arrangements.

prominent leaders or other religious affiliations. ‘The leaders of the Jewish community have been well-represented at both official and private festivities’, the *Jewish Times* would later note.¹³⁹

In contrast, Indigenous Australians were almost entirely absent from the itinerary; Australia’s Aboriginal population were simply not present in the minds of the organisers. It was not until the tour was well under way that White suggested to Grigg that a ‘native display of some kind’ could be staged as a diversion during the royal train’s long journey across the Nullarbor towards Adelaide.¹⁴⁰ This is a powerful contrast to the active engagement with indigenous populations at earlier points of the tour. In New Zealand for example, equal status and prominence was afforded to both Maori and Pakeha dignitaries in welcoming the visitors to their communities, and frequent presence of Maori dancing, gift-giving and other cultural activities asserted their visibility. In a cinematographic film of the tour, the Prince is seen in conversation with Maori men identified as having fought with the Anzac troops during the First World War, legitimising and furthering their position as New Zealand’s first peoples on an equal standing to white residents.¹⁴¹ **Image 9**

In this light, it is no longer remarkable to find that many aspects of the tour were deliberately orchestrated according to the dominant agenda of those involved. The final route travelled represents the exhaustive culmination of various competing prerogatives as to the type of Australia, and the type of community the Prince should see, with equal emphasis on what he should not see. Australian labour perceptions demonstrated a willingness to welcome the Prince as an individual rather than the representative of an institution. With little deliberate intervention on behalf of the British or Australia

¹³⁹ ‘JEWISH GUESTS’, *Jewish Herald*, Vic., 25 June 1920, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 3, ‘Western Australia.’ Letter to Grigg from White, undated, likely June 1920.

¹⁴¹ *50,000 miles with the Prince of Wales*, (1920) (dir. William Barker, Topical Film Company). Item 843, IWM, reel 3.

administrators, the stage in 1920 was set for the entry of an innocuously democratic and benevolent monarch-to-be.

Aboard H.M.S. *Renown*

The royal party's departure from Portsmouth in early March was briefly delayed due to an outbreak of influenza among the crew.¹⁴² Refurbishment work had for months been underway on H.M.S. *Renown*, a lightly armoured battleship first launched in 1916 with the British fleet in the North Sea, and familiar to the Prince as the transport used for the Canadian tour. On returning to England, it was recommissioned in December 1919 for the Australian tour.¹⁴³ Halsey was in charge of a staff of 1400. As well as the Prince's inner retinue, H.M.S. *Renown* was also host to a significant representation of the British and Australian press. This contingent had an important role to play, not only in sending back accounts of the Prince's visit for publication in their home countries, but also publicising the attractions of Australia and New Zealand to the Empire. Unlike in Britain, where the Establishment was able to exercise control over the conservative press through informal patronage, royal administrators were unable to influence the more candid Dominion press in quite the same way. When travelling in Australia, a steady and reliably favourable series of accounts of the journey could thus be syndicated directly to the major metropolitan and regional newspapers. While admitting that the cost of accommodating the journalists throughout the tour was not insignificant, Grigg assured Munro Ferguson that their presence would be 'of permanent value in spreading knowledge in this country of Australian achievement and resources.'¹⁴⁴ Nor were the

¹⁴² TNA, ADM 116/1871. Letter to Admiralty from The Commander in Chief, Portsmouth, 6 March 1920.

¹⁴³ TNA, ADM 116/1871. Letter to The Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, to The Commander in Chief, Portsmouth, 30 December 1919.

¹⁴⁴ NAA, A11052, 10. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Grigg, 4 March 1920.

opportunities limited to within the Empire. Mark Sheldon, the Commonwealth Commissioner in New York, felt that any positive publicity that could be repeated in the American press ‘will do a lot of good ... it will get the average American thinking in the right direction’ he said.¹⁴⁵ **Image 10**

There were six resident journalists on board. One was Keith Murdoch, the later press tycoon who was then managing the Australian United Cable Association in London, as well as Basil Long, the Dominions Editor for the London *Times* and *Daily Mail*, John Sandes of the Australian Press Association, Everard Cotes of Reuters who wrote for the Sydney *Sun* and the Melbourne *Herald*, and Victor Marsden, of the London *Morning Post*. Jack Myers of the London *Morning Telegram* joined the group in Melbourne. Grigg had to acknowledge that some were ‘rather difficult people’, although he stressed that Lloyd George and Milner hoped their presence would enhance the tour as ‘an imperial event of wide significance.’¹⁴⁶ The difficult personalities seem to have made themselves known by the time the voyagers had reached Sydney, with the Prince describing ‘a bunch of the completest shits that call themselves pressmen...the biggest shit of the bunch is Keith Murdoch.’¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ NAA, A2, 1920/1113 PART 26. Quoted in letter to Prime Minister’s Secretary from Governor-General’s Secretary, 30 April 1920.

¹⁴⁶ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to Munro Ferguson from Grigg, 23 April 1920.

¹⁴⁷ Letter to P. Sassoon from Edward, Prince of Wales, 5 July 1920, quoted in Peter Stansky, *Sassoon: the worlds of Philip and Sybil* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 97. This judgement seemingly originated from Murdoch’s preparation of an article that gently chided the Prince for an instance of lateness when in New Zealand (“THE UNPUNCTUAL PRINCE”, *Geelong Advertiser*, Vic., 13 May 1920, p. 4). Later, the breakdown in the relationship would appear to have worsened: ‘LABOR CRITICISES AND EXPOUNDS WHY KEITH MURDOCH RETIRED’, *Westralian Worker*, Perth, W.A., 16 July 1920, p. 4. Murdoch was a supporter of Hughes and the nationalist cause. Geoffrey Serle, ‘Murdoch, Sir Keith Arthur (1885-1952)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murdoch-sir-keith-arthur-7693/text13467>>, accessed 29 January 2016.

The media strategy also included visual representation. Ernest Brooks was the official royal photographer.¹⁴⁸ The British organisers were also well aware of the importance of cinematography as a new technology for promotion of the royal family.¹⁴⁹ As British newspaper proprietor Lord Riddell opined, ‘of course everyone recognises the popularity and influences of the cinema.’¹⁵⁰ The same can be said for the Australian context. Graham Shirley and Brian Adams describe 1920s cinematography as ‘an industrialised cultural force more potent and popular than any other medium.’¹⁵¹ Matthews also describes how during the early years of the twentieth century, Australian cinema was the chief symbol of modernism, inspiring changes in fashion, celebrity, design, architecture, urban environment, photography and other media such as radio.¹⁵² At this time, cinematography, and especially imported American films, exuded an enticingly morally suspect guise, perceived by conservatives as symptomatic of inter-war social malaise.¹⁵³

But none could deny the value of a record of the Prince’s tour, and accordingly William Barker of the Topical Film Company was commissioned by the Admiralty to record ‘important and interesting incidents of his journey.’¹⁵⁴ White was quick to capitalise on this as ‘a unique opportunity for advertising Australia’ and rushed to urge state organisers that they might prepare for Barker’s consideration a special program of opportunities for him to obtain ‘pictures which should be of value in advertising.’¹⁵⁵ The federal government’s Department of Home and Territories’ Cinema and

¹⁴⁸ NAA, A11052, 8. Minute titled ‘Press representatives on board H.M.S ‘Renown’, undated.

¹⁴⁹ The 1901 tour was also recorded by cinematographers.

¹⁵⁰ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, 1920 tour, press arrangements.’ Letter to Grigg from Lord Riddell, 6 February 1920.

¹⁵¹ Graham Shirley and Brian Adams, *Australian cinema: the first eighty years* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Angus & Robertson, 1983), p. 44.

¹⁵² Matthews, *Dance hall & picture palace*, p. 15.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, TS 32/61. Minute outlining tender process for commission of film by Barker, 5 March 1920.

¹⁵⁵ NAA, A6678, R56. Unauthored note, likely by White, 6 May 1920.

Photographic Branch was keen to follow suit and exploit the ‘historic value’ of a comprehensive visual record of the tour.¹⁵⁶ At Melbourne, the journalistic entourage would be swelled by the addition of the Commonwealth Cinematographer, Bert Ive, and his assistant Henry Kellock. **Image 11**

All this added up to a huge number of people who comprised the ship’s company. The extremes of rank and status on board had the potential to give rise to confusion, and caused some anxiety that the Australian government might inadvertently fail to observe some murky requirement of protocol and lay itself open to criticism. White urged officials engage respectfully with all members of the royal entourage given the sometimes misleading nature of their official titles. ‘It is found that the terms “clerk” and “servant” differ from our usual expectation’, he warned tactfully.¹⁵⁷ The Sydney administrators put considerable effort into arranging recreational activities for the ship’s company when H.M.S. *Renown* would be at anchor during the Prince’s visit, including a concert by the ‘Cheer Oh! Girls’, free trips to the zoological gardens at Taronga Park, racecourses and the Blue Mountains, a picnic and a dance at Town Hall, plus a ‘liberal supply of cinematograph films’ for their entertainment.¹⁵⁸

H.M.S. *Renown*’s rescheduled departure took place on 16 March 1920. On leaving Freda, the Prince described how he ‘found going out of harbour a great strain on my self-control & all but cried like a baby again.’¹⁵⁹ Yet although professing to be smitten by thoughts of his mistress, the Prince gave every appearance of enjoying himself on board. Careful consideration had been paid to his comfort and entertainment.

¹⁵⁶ NAA, A6678, R45. Letter to A. Hunt from White, 16 February 1920.

¹⁵⁷ NAA, A6678, R56. Memorandum to all state organisers from White, 31 May 1920.

¹⁵⁸ Unknown author, *Royal visit to Australia, May-August 1920: H.M.S. Renown at Sydney, N.S.W* (Sydney: William Applegate Gullick, Government Printer, 1920), p 4. Item 554017, NLA.

¹⁵⁹ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince: Edward, Prince of Wales to Mrs Freda Dudley Ward, March 1918 - January 1921*, ed. Rupert Godfrey (London: Warner, 1999), p. 255. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 16 March 1920. It is important to note that Edward wrote to Dudley Ward as a lover and so the epistolary format of his letters may distort or otherwise influence some of the information offered as evidence.

The on-board inventory included 29 cases of spirits, liquors, vermouths and bitters for the makings of a fine cocktail bar.¹⁶⁰ A band entertained the crew and came ashore to play during dances that the Prince attended.¹⁶¹ Described by Stamfordham as often prey to ‘a craze of exercise’, Edward spent many hours running, clay pigeon shooting, and playing squash or hockey.¹⁶² His mania was reported on condescendingly by some sections of the Australian press. The ‘constant donning of shorts and promiscuous sprinting’ suggested that the Olympic Games were being held in Australia and ‘Eddie is an entrant for all events’, quipped the *Worker*.¹⁶³ **Image 12**

The ship travelled via Barbados, Colon, Panama, San Diego and Honolulu, arriving in Fiji on 20 April.¹⁶⁴ Here, Grigg was able to peruse the latest details of any ‘disloyalty’ in a fresh batch of Australian newspapers.¹⁶⁵ Edward also met with two Australian naval officers who, with representatives of the New Zealand Governor-General, had journeyed to submit their proposed programs in advance.¹⁶⁶ Ziegler has described the New Zealand leg as ‘an important but relatively relaxed rehearsal for the main task ahead.’¹⁶⁷ Yet despite Grigg’s pleas for free time every day and no early starts, the New Zealand Governor-General had approved a program of terrifying arduousness. It was possible to make some alterations to the Australian program, although Grigg noted approvingly that this was ‘exceedingly well-arranged.’¹⁶⁸ There

¹⁶⁰ TNA, ADM 116/1871. Curtiss & Sons Ltd. receipt, 28 June 1920.

¹⁶¹ NAA, A11052, 7. The band proved controversial: local Australian musicians felt that the economic downturn would be better served by using a band of returned servicemen.

¹⁶² NLA, MS 696/513-514. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Stamfordham, 26 January 1920; Louis Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922: tours with the Prince of Wales*, ed. Philip Ziegler (London: Collins, 1987), p. 20. Entries for 18, 19 and 20 March 1920.

¹⁶³ ‘The Prince’, *Worker*, Brisbane, Qld., 13 May 1920, p. 14.

¹⁶⁴ For a full description of the voyage of H.M.S. *Renown* including further discussion of the New Zealand section of the tour, see Everard Cotes, *Down under with the prince* (London: Methuen, 1921).

¹⁶⁵ NAA, A6690, 1. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from British Consul, San Diego, 10 April 1920

¹⁶⁶ NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Governor-General, Fiji, from Munro Ferguson, 17 March 1920.

¹⁶⁷ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 126.

¹⁶⁸ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/10. Letter to King George V from Grigg, 18 April 1920.

was little time to change the New Zealand arrangements immediately under way. The ship arrived in Auckland on 24 April, for what would be a demanding tour, leaving the Prince and party exhausted before the next stage of the voyage: Australia.

This chapter has examined the preparations for the 1920 Australian tour that ensued in both Britain and Australia following the end of the First World War with the aim of identifying the extent to which wartime perceptions of the Prince were sustained within broader pro-imperial imperatives. From its very beginnings, the royal tour was highly strategic in timing, scope and press approach. The four main aspects of the Prince's persona – a symbol of the Crown, as an inspiration for peace, as a modern exemplar and as a member of the family – were promoted heavily throughout. Remarkably, Edward was seldom actively criticised; he was seen as an unwitting cog in a larger institutional system over which he had no control. Moreover, the enthusiasm with which Australians responded to the tour is undeniable. This reveals a widespread and prevalent eagerness to assert independence and, with the help of new types of visual media, promote the country's attractions to their own strategic advantage. We may now turn to consider how the results of such extensive preparations played out during the tour that eventuated, and how these four qualities would become even more firmly embodied in the figure of the Prince.

Chapter 3: Our Digger Prince

[The] living symbol of that empire in whose achievements we have shared and whose glory is our pride.

-*The Farmer and Settler*, 4 June 1920.¹

Charting Edward's arrival in Melbourne in May 1920 through his onward journey through Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, to his departure from Sydney in August, this chapter provides the first detailed narrative of the royal tour of 1920. This allows us to examine Fewster's argument that the royal visit enhanced the connection between the Crown and a significant proportion of the Australian population, in light of Beaumont's observation that post-war imperial loyalty served as a long-lasting dominant political ideology.² Within this context, I observe that aspects of Edward's individual persona flourished, becoming in the process ever more disassociated from his role as a political icon and formal guarantor of democracy. How did Australian perceptions of the Prince's individual qualities – as a symbol of the Crown, as an inspiration for peace, as a modern exemplar and as a member of the family – feature in the celebrations across the country? What other cultural dynamics might emerge in such a study?

This chapter will explore the ways the Prince's qualities resonated in the perceptions of particular groups as he made his way across the country. It is important to note that sometimes these appear fleeting or state-specific, while others are repeated at almost every point of the journey. Nevertheless, all offer new insights into the contested loyalties present in Australia of 1920, and the hopes, fears and prejudices of

¹ 'THE PRINCE AND THE PEOPLE', *The Farmer and Settler*, Sydney, N.S.W., 4 June 1920, p. 1.

² Fewster, 'Politics, Pageantry and Purpose', p. 59; Beaumont, "'Unitedly we have fought'", p. 399.

all those who came into contact with the ‘Digger’ Prince and his entourage.

Establishing a popular precedent in Victoria

The vigour of the welcome afforded to the royal party on landing in Melbourne set the tone for the rest of the state. H.M.S *Renown* arrived on 26 May following a rough crossing from New Zealand. Thick fog and unpredictable tides prevented the battleship from entering the harbour as planned, and the royal party were eventually ferried to St Kilda pier via the Australian destroyer H.M.A.S. *Anzac* and then the less glamorous P.S. *Hygeia*. Although unintentional, the hours of delay served only to heighten the anticipation of almost a million people – many more than the usual resident population – who lined the surrounding roads.³ The Prince was first welcomed with obsequious fanfare by Munro Ferguson and prime minister Hughes, followed by a tediously long line of ‘hundreds of other bearded old men.’⁴ It was then his turn to greet the gathered crowds. ‘The Australians must be handled with care’ the Governor-General advised, adding ‘they hate formality.’⁵ Unfortunately, this perception had not been taken into account in the arrangement for the royal progress, which featured all the wearisome ceremonials the Prince despised, especially the use of horses and carriages that he viewed as outmoded and dangerous.⁶ ‘We drove solemnly for 2 hrs through the streets in cocked hats till I thought I should die!!’ he complained to Freda.⁷

Nonetheless, from most other perspectives it was a triumph of twentieth century royal diplomacy, demonstrating all the pageantry expected of the arrival of the King’s

³ ‘THE LANDING OF THE PRINCE’, *Northern Star*, Lismore, N.S.W., 27 May 1920, p. 2. Other estimates identify between 500,000 and 750,000 spectators.

⁴ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 309. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 27 May 1920.

⁵ Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 154.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 309. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 27 May 1920.

son. The party proceeded to Government House, where the ferocity of the crowd soon became overwhelming. Halsey described how ‘the whole thing – although very nice – was extremely trying to the nerves ... the people, in their enthusiasm, kept up a regular bombardment of flowers, flags, nuts and other things.’⁸ The procession took hours longer than scheduled and the Prince and his staff arrived bruised and exhausted, although not without a profound sense of relief.

The crowd’s enthusiasm seemed to confirm the predominance of loyalty to the Crown over the disloyalty thought to lurk in Melbourne’s population. As far as the royal party was concerned, the vast crowd was proof of the Prince’s physical presence as transcending social division and providing a neutral and democratic focal point for community celebration. Edward later recalled that any doubts he had entertained were overturned following the landing.⁹ Grigg was also thankful to find no vestige of Mannix’s supposedly ‘seditious and untiring propaganda.’¹⁰ The triumphant procession seemed testament to a wellspring of collective Australian support for imperialism. Journalist Donald McDonald perceived that ‘something heroic, Homeric, or very very human has plumbed the depths, and we stand dazed, perhaps a little bit in awe.’¹¹ The industrialist Herbert Brookes wrote that:

It was an inspiration. It was joy unspeakable ... Those crowds! That welcome! This clean clear winsome Prince! ... I was amazed by [the throng’s] continuous and thunderous and spontaneous welcome. Instinctively they felt the call of the blood, the tug at the roots of their souls when they beheld personified in this handsome youth the Unity of our Empire.¹²

Not everyone was as enamoured. Although in distant northern New South Wales the Tamworth *Daily Observer* had heard that the arrival ‘represented every section of

⁸ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/28. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 2 June 1920.

⁹ Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 155.

¹⁰ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/33. Letter to King George V from Grigg, 20 June 1920.

¹¹ ‘PRINCE AND PEOPLE’, *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 5 June 1920, p. 6.

¹² NLA, MS 1924/1/6219, Herbert and Ivy Brookes papers. Letter to the Rev. T.E. Ruth from Brookes, 26 May 1920.

society’, there is some suggestion that all was not quite as it seemed.¹³ *The Catholic Press*, for example, had claimed that ‘certain theatrical tricks’ had been employed in the pageantry, where the 20,000 troops stationed along the St Kilda road for the arrival were to be hurried over to East Melbourne to catch the end of the royal progress ‘to impress the Prince all over again.’¹⁴ In any case, considering that many were enjoying a paid holiday, it seems certain that not all attendees were compelled by loyalty alone. What we know of the attitudes of Anzac troops in Egypt, who were ambivalent towards royalty yet queued to obtain a ‘snap’ of the Prince for posterity, also suggests that the novelty of celebrity was a powerful draw. Dissenters seem to have comprised a modest minority. One ‘Sinn Feiner’ reportedly had his green flag ‘torn to tatters’ by two mothers of ex-servicemen.¹⁵ Bricklayer Alexander Thomas was arrested after slipping into a restricted area with a card bearing the words ‘Home Rule’ and a green flag, which he supposedly intended to throw at the Prince’s feet.¹⁶ Even taking into account the ambivalent and perhaps hostile perspectives present, it seems from enthusiastic reports that the majority of the crowd was wholeheartedly focused on the pursuit of a good day out. **Image 13**

Irrespective of their place on the political and religious spectrum, many also seemed to positively relish the chance to heckle their parliamentary representatives. Hughes was both resoundingly booed and applauded during the royal progress. On one hand, Brookes gleefully perceived that ‘the little leader is now down and out once and for all’, while in contrast another spectator wrote to Hughes to express ‘horror and indignation at the cowardly and dastardly treatment meted out to you.’¹⁷ Significant

¹³ ‘PRINCE ARRIVES’, *Daily Observer*, Tamworth, N.S.W., 27 May 1920, p. 2.

¹⁴ ‘Here, There and Everywhere’, *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 25 March 1920, p. 6.

¹⁵ ‘PRINCE ARRIVES’, *Daily Observer*, Tamworth, N.S.W., 27 May 1920, p. 2.

¹⁶ ‘ST. KILDA PIER INCIDENT’, *The Ballarat Star* Vic., 28 May 1920, p. 1.

¹⁷ NLA, MS 1924/1/6219. Letter to W. Massy-Greene from Brookes, 2 June 1920; NLA, MS 1538/1/83, William Morris Hughes papers. Letter to Hughes from (signature illegible), 26 May 1920.

here was Mountbatten's perception that Hughes' reception in no way interfered with the 'genuine cheers for H.R.H.'¹⁸ This not only confirms that attendees were profoundly divided over Hughes' politics, but also that enthusiasm for Edward as an individual was seemingly uncompromised by the association. However, the more they saw of Hughes, both Grigg and Halsey would come to feel that the Prince should be disassociated from the Australian prime minister, both physically and politically.

The carnival ascended to even greater heights over the following days. A multitude of events were aimed at ordinary Australians in the metropolitan area. Many Society functions such as balls, suppers and garden parties required invitations and so were limited to those deemed socially prominent or strategic by administrators. It was surely not insignificant, for example, that Frank Tudor's daughter danced twice with the Prince on his first night in town.¹⁹ There were nonetheless dozens of other functions arranged for the multitude of holiday-making middle and working-class Australians who wished to lay eyes on the Prince. As well as the royal progress, events such as race meetings, cricket matches and military parades all required the attendance of crowds to be considered successful. The presentation of the Prince for the visual consumption of the people would become the tour's defining characteristic, enhanced by its billing as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the man 'who is to be our King.'²⁰ Most remarkably, Melbourne's Royal Exhibition Building was host to Australia's first so-called 'People's Reception', where, as Grigg had envisioned, attendees were admitted 'without ticket or social selection of any kind.'²¹ Here the Prince stood on a dais for two hours as 20,000 people trotted past five abreast, craning their necks, at a rate of 170 per minute. This type of mass public event reinforced Australian perceptions of the Prince's

¹⁸ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 64. Entry for 26 May 1920.

¹⁹ 'The Prince', *The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser* N.S.W., 18 June 1920, p. 2.

²⁰ 'The Royal Visit', *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, N.S.W., 2 July 1920, p. 2.

²¹ NAA, A11052, 3. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Milner, 28 January 1920.

accessibility but not his capacity for exhaustion. Perceptively, Edward recognised the need to echo the Australians behaviour with his own, writing that they were a ‘very go ahead modern people & ultra democratic & as soon as one realises this & their energy and exuberance of spirits one gets on well with them.’²² However, the People’s Reception was not without its dangers. The crush in the Royal Exhibition Building caused over a hundred people to faint and three were hospitalised.²³ **Image 14**

Events also delivered the Prince directly to the working people in the outer suburbs and regions. At Flemington, in southern Melbourne, he attended a purposely arranged Royal Agricultural Show, enabling many Australians ‘belonging to the country districts’ who had been unable to travel to the inner-city to see him.²⁴ Similarly, as Grigg pointed out, the departure from Port Melbourne allowed the Prince to receive ‘a wonderful send-off from all the people of the poorer districts.’²⁵ The Victorian itinerary also called for day trips by train through regional areas such as Geelong, Winchelsea and Colac. Edward either stopped briefly to exchange a few words with a local dignitary or simply waved from the train as it passed. To the delight of observers, in Bendigo he donned brown overalls and descended down a mine-shaft accompanied by Hughes, who, according to Mountbatten, stood at the bottom ‘telling “funny” stories about what happened when the rope broke.’²⁶

While this concerted effort made it possible for many poorer, elderly or geographically-isolated Australians to have visual access to the Prince, there were limits. Many could not afford the time away from home or the expense of travelling to an observation point. Annie Jackson, living on a remote station near Ivanhoe on the

²² RA, EDW/PRIV/MAIN/A/2291. Letter to King George V from Edward, Prince of Wales, 29 June 1920.

²³ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 66. Entry for 28 May 1920.

²⁴ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/28. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 2 June 1920.

²⁵ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/33. Letter to King George V from Grigg, 20 June 1920.

²⁶ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 76. Entry for 4 June 1920.

New South Wales border, regretted that ‘dry, bad times will not permit of my going to the city to see everything, but one has to look after the men folk these droughty times – they have such long days of toil and worry.’²⁷ Similarly, Sabai Island schoolchildren wrote from the Torres Strait to tell the Prince how ‘we wish we could meet you, but we are too far away.’²⁸

Nonetheless, the fervent media coverage of the Prince’s every move allowed every Australian to follow his journey should they choose to do so. This illustrates how events are created for readers through these communicative rituals, rather than merely reflecting an accurate portrayal. The journalists from H.M.S. *Renown* who were travelling in the Prince’s party were true to the direction of the British administrators to present the event as one of great imperial significance, which they seemed to interpret as regaling readers with the most tedious of minutiae. This met with only disgust from their local Australian counterparts; these men were ‘comporting themselves in a way which would only be pardonable if the Prince were the Messiah’, observed the *World*.²⁹ The pressmen appeared to have ‘searched the English vocabulary for the most lavish phrases’, despaired the *National Advocate*.³⁰ Others ridiculed some of Murdoch and Sandes’ most trite observations concerning Edward’s ‘smooth’ hair, or the ‘well-worn’ appearance of his belt (concluding it had ‘evidently seen service at the front’).³¹ **Image**

15

Whether obsequious or wry, the press’ intimate observance combined with heightened visual accessibility served only to enhance the Prince’s familiarity to the

²⁷ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to ‘Miss Robertson’ from Mrs J. S. (Annie M.) Jackson, undated, likely June 1920.

²⁸ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to Edward, Prince of Wales, from Aboriginal School, Sabai Island, 23 June 1920.

²⁹ ‘THE EXPLOITERS OF A PRINCE’, *World*, Hobart, Tas., 3 June 1920, p. 4.

³⁰ ‘LIONISING A PRINCE’, *National Advocate*, Bathurst, N.S.W., 4 May 1920, p. 2.

³¹ ‘THE PRINCE AND THE PRESSMAN’, *Westralian Worker*, Perth, W.A., 4 June 1920, p. 4.

public eye. Considering Halsey's complaint about the time spent managing the 'very heavy correspondence received from all classes of the community', including those 'who wish their grievances laid before the Prince', we might surmise that Australians felt comfortable addressing him directly.³² Edward did seem to genuinely enjoy engaging with individuals, and his all-too obvious dislike for officialdom resonated with the anti-authoritarian leanings of the population. In this way, he successfully integrated himself with Australians almost as if a member of the family. 'He just does wonders with the general public', Halsey remarked of the Prince's propensity to delay the program by stopping to talk with people.³³ Edward himself observed the Australian tendency to distinguish the monarch from their British antecedents. Australians were 'far more loyal to you than they are actually fond of the Old Country which they can't resist having a dig at sometimes', he told his father.³⁴ It seems Australians were unreserved in their willingness to project aspirational qualities onto this rather ordinary man, and in their readiness to disengage him from his symbolic role. Edward had yet to set foot outside Victoria when the Sydney-based *Farmer and Settler* confidently asserted that his character comprised more than 'the dignity that doth hedge about a throne', perceiving 'a strong kinship of feeling with the people.'³⁵

Bearing in mind Pickering's argument that Australians' ability to differentiate between individual monarchs and the institution they represented has enabled the survival of the monarchy despite the poor behaviour of the incumbent, this evidence also suggests that Edward's early popularity and 'good' behaviour did much to buttress lukewarm local support for the institution by reflecting becomingly on imperialism and

³² TNA, ADM 116/1871. Letter to Admiralty from Halsey, 30 June 1920.

³³ NLA, MFM M1179. Letter to 'Mother' from Halsey, 14 June 1920.

³⁴ RA, EDW/PRIV/MAIN/A/2291. Letter to King George V from Edward, Prince of Wales, 29 June 1920. Punctuation in original.

³⁵ 'THE PRINCE AND THE PEOPLE', *The Farmer and Settler*, Sydney, N.S.W., 4 June 1920, p. 1.

modernity more generally.³⁶ Some observers, for example, unquestioningly concluded that he held certain elevated social and moral values, as well as a practical capacity to effect change. For example, although he had previously protested against the spending of public funds on the tour, William Maloney was also certain that the Prince's sympathy lay with social justice for the poor, suggesting that Edward might 'take a quiet drive' through Melbourne's deprived areas with a view to making some statement 'that slums and slumdom should be abolished.'³⁷

However, by the same token, some of the Prince's supposedly democratic and modern qualities offended more conservative sensibilities. His staff and journalists had to work hard to manage his profile. Following a range of both facetious and hostile New Zealand press concerning the Prince's taste for modest gambling and allegations that he danced only with the prettier women, ALP Member James Mathews held the view that conservatives had not been 'giving the Prince a chance' and that the more opinionated of the press should be suppressed under a clause in the *War Precautions Act* that prevented inciting contempt towards or hatred of the monarchy.³⁸ The nationalist journalist and politician Randolph Bedford also held that the 'heavily-veiled' protestations of the 'loyal wowsers' succeeded only in making the 'kindly lad' an object of ridicule.³⁹

Unfortunately some Australians were undeniably irked by the Prince's supposedly irreverent attitude to modern temptations. The 'Christian Evidence Propaganda' group, for example, despaired over the inclusion of 'the things that are trivial and void of real worth, such as races and dancing' on the Prince's itinerary, and

³⁶ Pickering, 'Confronting the good monarch', p. 126, 129-31.

³⁷ NAA, A11052, 2. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Maloney, 3 June 1920.

³⁸ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 28 April 1920, p. 1532.

³⁹ 'THE PRINCE AND THE PAPERS', *The Gloucester Advocate*, N.S.W., 21 July 1920, p. 2.

the neglect of adequate ‘time for prayer and praise to almighty God.’⁴⁰ Melbournian James Challis also wrote to voice his ‘great grief’ concerning the Prince’s liking for a flutter and implored him to ‘set a right example in all things.’⁴¹

The Prince’s greatest success was with the returned soldiers in his role as an inspiration for peace. As would be repeated elsewhere in the country, many Victorian events incorporated public displays of gratitude towards returned servicemen. With his presence as a validation of sacrifice, the Prince’s itinerary was interleaved with visits to war memorials and monuments. As Ken Inglis has suggested, the construction and veneration of monuments provide a means for a community to focus on ‘pride and gratitude for its successful heroes [and assuage] the sense of grief elicited by the deaths of its heroic failures.’⁴² In Ballarat, for example, the Prince officiated over the opening of a 14-mile tree-lined ‘Avenue of Honour.’ Fronted by a memorial Arch of Victory, over 4,000 trees each commemorated a local soldier in a powerful and vernacular expression of honour and memorialising. In this emotionally charged atmosphere, the Prince’s public utterances were reduced to simply a piece of inspiring rhetoric devoid of political or personal agenda. In Ballarat, for example, he identified himself as a fellow ‘soldier of the Empire’, praised the town’s ‘splendid troops’ and offered sympathy to those who had suffered disablement or loss.⁴³

Privately however, Edward’s views differed. ‘I went to the races at Flemington [sic] but I only got 2 hrs racing as I had to go to a hospital for incurable returned men to visit about 20 spinal cases which was sordid & pathetic!!’ he grumbled.⁴⁴ But the

⁴⁰ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Sydney and N.S.W. 1920.’ Letter to Edward, Prince of Wales, from D. Simpson, 16 June 1920.

⁴¹ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to Edward, Prince of Wales, from Challis, 29 April 1920.

⁴² Quoted in Graeme Davison, *The use and abuse of Australian history* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 40.

⁴³ ‘REST FOR THE PRINCE’, *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 3 June 1920, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 317. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 3 June 1920.

returned soldiers' affection for the Prince was much in evidence. Edward described how during the royal progress many drunken ex-servicemen 'tried to jump into the barouche in their efforts to do in that unfortunate right hand of mine.'⁴⁵ During a more restrained function, Halsey noted that 'nothing could have been nicer than the quiet and delightful way in which these men received him.'⁴⁶ **Image 16**

The royal party considered their time in Victoria an outstanding success. The sense of civic celebration remained heightened throughout. 'It's frightfully touching & I do appreciate it all so much!! It beats anywhere in Canada', Edward told his mother.⁴⁷ Australian perceptions of the Prince as a thoroughly modern monarch-to-be, and possessing an egalitarian dislike of authority resonated across the state. The intensity of the program had taken its toll on his health however, and his voice all but disappeared. In an attempt to lower the hubbub in Kyneton, Victoria, two orderlies had taken to holding up signs printed with 'Silence' to help Edward avoid delivering his speech at a shout.⁴⁸ Mountbatten thought that the strenuousness of the program had been 'more than even a super-human could be expected to stand.'⁴⁹ To Freda, the Prince wrote:

I'm becoming such a wreck & I'm afraid I'm beginning to look it now as I'm always hearing "Oh isn't he tired" muttered in the crowds ... I'm so stale that I've just ceased to worry now & hardly ever look at the programme & often haven't the least idea where I'm going.⁵⁰

The schedule was delayed by one week for recuperation in anticipation of the arduous program ahead. H.M.S. *Renown* left Melbourne on 13 June bound for the New South Wales coast.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 310. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 27 May 1920. The Prince usually tried to shake hands with his left as his right had been damaged by over-zealous greetings.

⁴⁶ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/28. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 2 June 1920.

⁴⁷ RA, QM/PRIV/CC09. Letter to Queen Mary from Edward, Prince of Wales, 3 June 1920.

⁴⁸ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 75. Entry for 4 June 1920.

⁴⁹ NLA, MS 9570, Louis Mountbatten correspondence. Letter to Dudley Ward from Mountbatten, 1 July 1920.

⁵⁰ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 313. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 30 May 1920.

Wooring the workers in New South Wales

Despite the triumph of the Victorian section of the tour, the royal party were assailed with fresh misgivings about how Australian public opinion might change from state to state. A ‘sinister’ motive was mooted when forged tickets to restricted areas were found by officials to be in circulation, sparking fears that ‘persons bent on making a disloyal demonstration’ were at work.⁵¹ Joseph Clarkson, a New South Wales policeman, was dispatched to investigate a claim alleged by a member of the public that the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were planning an attack.⁵² Having conducted some modest enquiries, Clarkson found no evidence for the suggestion the group meant the Prince any harm, and also put to rest any concerns the royal party had about Sinn Féin supporters in New South Wales.⁵³ Without firm evidence to the contrary, however, it seems that, as in Victoria, the charge of disloyalty was mostly exaggerated and those who opposed imperialism as the dominant political rhetoric given their nationalist or labour principles had in fact little outright objection to the figure of the Prince *per se*.

As it turned out, the greatest tension at play during the New South Wales tour was the rancorous relationship between Munro Ferguson and the Governor of New South Wales, Walter Davidson. Like governors of other states, Davidson resented the Governor-General’s constitutional precedence as the King’s representative. As the states held their own legislative power maintaining a direct relationship with the monarch in which the Commonwealth could not interfere, he fought to greet the Prince on his own independent terms and secure a major role for his Labor Premier, John Storey, as the

⁵¹ ‘PRINCE OF WALES’, *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, Darwin, NT, 17 June 1920, p. 5.

⁵² RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Sydney and N.S.W. 1920.’ Letter to Halsey from Clarkson, 15 June 1920, and letter to Grigg from M. Witts, 9 June 1920. The I.W.W. was active in Australia from 1907 in advocating for grassroots labour organisation, and against capitalism and conscription. Propounding an ideology of anarcho-syndicalism, it advocated revolution through means of the general strike.

⁵³ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 2, ‘Sydney and N.S.W. 1920.’ Letter to Halsey from Clarkson, 15 June 1920.

people's representative. Sparks flew when the Governor-General indicated that he himself would be first to welcome the Prince onshore in Sydney, (having only recently welcomed him to the country in Melbourne) and would present him to the Governor and the Premier. It was inconceivable, Storey protested, that Munro Ferguson could 'be regarded as representative of the people of this State.'⁵⁴ Although Davidson went so far as to allege a plot to 'frame the functional ceremonials so as to arrogate all authority and position' to the Commonwealth, and 'belittle' his own role, he was forced into acquiescence.⁵⁵ Milner had to pointedly remind Davidson that Munro Ferguson acted on commands issued by the King.⁵⁶

Unaware of the vigorous debate, the Prince arrived at Farm Cove on 16 June. Once again, a thunderous welcome greeted him. The sirens of the flotilla of both naval and privately owned watercraft waiting in the bay were so exuberant that the crew of H.M.S *Renown* had trouble hearing orders on board.⁵⁷ On land, a crowd of around a million people waited in the streets for Munro Ferguson to perform his irksome ceremonials and allow the royal visitor to embark on his first royal progress to Government House. As in Melbourne, Grigg recalled how 'the drive through the streets of Sydney lasted over an hour, and was one long scene of wild enthusiasm.'⁵⁸ One might wonder how much the rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne was a factor in the decision of spectators to attend. In one breath, the *Sydney Evening News* was able to describe the 'mad delight' of the crowd but also their 'sporting instinct' to avoid rushing the car in a repeat of the 'Melbourne experience.'⁵⁹ Afterwards, Davidson could not resist claiming that 'the thunderous acclamations among all classes' were evidence of a 'desire to show that Sydney can do these better and in more orderly fashion than

⁵⁴ TNA, CO 418/192. 'Minute for His Excellency the Governor' by Storey, 1 May 1920.

⁵⁵ TNA, CO 418/192. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Davidson, 10 May 1920.

⁵⁶ NAA, A6690, 1. Letter to Davidson from Milner, 29 July 1920.

⁵⁷ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/33. Letter to King George V from Grigg, 20 June 1920.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ 'SURGING CROWDS', *Evening News*, Sydney, N.S.W., 17 June 1920, p. 1.

Melbourne.’⁶⁰ This demonstrates how Australians could be both intensely ‘British’ and also deeply loyal to their own state or district. **Image 17**

One common element between the two cities was the apparent lack of any real conflict between ‘loyal’ and left-wing or working-class spectators, all the more surprising given the howls of the pro-imperialists before the Prince arrived in the country. Even the more radical of the Labor politicians and supporters seemed to have revised their previously staunch determination to avoid the event, perhaps in light of the popular success of Melbourne. Although some groups adhered to their disinclination to engage with the preparations (the city’s Labour [sic] Council had ‘not helped with the City’s illuminations and decorations at all’, one observer complained), this did not preclude their attendance at the celebrations.⁶¹ The Lord Mayor, William Fitzgerald, a labourite and Sinn Féin supporter, for example, participated in the procession although he was resoundingly booed by the crowd. The Labor Treasurer Jack Lang also recalled with condescension how one former Trade Hall official kept a bundle of photographs, ‘which for years afterwards he used to pull out of his drawer at the slightest excuse’ to point out himself in the vicinity of the Prince.⁶² Even allowing for some sentimentality, the Labor position in New South Wales largely followed the respectful rationale advocated by Storey and others during the preparations. This is best summarised by the *National Advocate* as the desire to:

Treat [Edward] as a real big man, and not as some extraordinary being or monstrosity, as depicted by the gush writers. Let us treat the future King as a King amongst us – a leader to whom we look with pride.⁶³

Labor participants made clear their stance against ‘snobbishness’, apparently as per the democratic desire of the Prince, but nonetheless committed to a rousing

⁶⁰ TNA, CO 418/192. Letter to Milner from Davidson, 6 July 1920.

⁶¹ NAA, A2, 1920/1113 PART 26. Letter to M.L. Shepherd from H. Ward, 12 May 1920.

⁶² J. T. Lang, *I remember* (Sydney, N.S.W: Invincible Press, 1956), p. 179. A reading of this autobiography suggests that Lang himself was no less captivated by the royal visitor.

⁶³ ‘LIONISING A PRINCE’, *National Advocate*, Bathurst, N.S.W., 4 May 1920, p. 2.

welcome as they would for any important visitor. The wily Hughes was well-aware of this body of opinion and went so far as to modify his own appearance during the royal progress in order to appease both ends of the voting spectrum. As mentioned in the previous chapter, despite instructions that no Australian should go to unnecessary expense in preparing for the visit, the issue of appropriate clothing and especially headwear had become of almost unbearable importance. Wishing to avoid being seen to acquiesce in British-imposed officialdom, Labor parliamentarians had been ‘conspicuous in soft grey felt hats’ at St Kilda.⁶⁴ Hughes, furthermore, insisted on bringing a cumbersome hatbox in the carriage with him, leaving ‘no room for anybody’s legs in the middle.’⁶⁵ The reason became clear after the procession started, when:

with almost a conjuror’s deftness, Mr Hughes whipped off the shiny silk topper, opened the box and produced a battered soft hat that he donned in its place, saying with a wink “you can’t be too careful. That top hat might have cost me thousands of votes.” However, as Government House hove into sight, the old felt hat was returned to the box; and the Prime Minister smilingly restored to his head the topper.⁶⁶

The determination of Labor politicians to treat the Prince as a welcome visitor seems to have extended to many of the spectators. Halsey, at least, perceived that ‘the Bolshies and Sinn Feiners ... are completely captured by him.’⁶⁷ Whether widespread or not, this does indicate some degree of workers’ support for the monarchy outside of political battlegrounds and underpins the successful presentation of the event as a benign chance to see a benevolent visiting celebrity. **Image 18**

Support extended throughout the tour of regional New South Wales. The party was first to travel to Toronto via the picturesque Hawkesbury River and then to

⁶⁴ ‘THE PRINCE ARRIVES’, *Geelong Advertiser*, Vic., 27 May 1920, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 80. Entry for 16 June 1920.

⁶⁶ Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 156-57.

⁶⁷ NLA, MFM M1179. Letter to ‘Mother’ from Halsey, 14 June 1920.

Newcastle where the Prince was to officially launch the steamship S.S. *Enoggera* at the Walsh Island dockyard on the Hunter River. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, activity at Walsh Island helped increase Australian industry and ‘uphold the British boast of “Britain Rules the Waves.”’⁶⁸ Although included on the itinerary for its ostensible role as manufacturing powerhouse for the Empire, whether this was an attitude shared by its workers was far less certain. As elsewhere, the royal party had viewed the scheduled tour through regional New South Wales with characteristic trepidation, unsure of how receptive some working areas would be to the arrival of the Prince. Halsey feared that workers in Newcastle were ‘the most advanced, and in some sections, revolutionary, in Australia.’⁶⁹

Initially, their troubles were to be found closer to home. Storey had both successfully curtailed Hughes’ desire to attend the Hawkesbury cruise and arranged matters so all those on board were members of his own government. Mountbatten explained that the day had begun badly for the royal party, when ‘all who struggled down for breakfast showed distressing signs of the debauchery of the night before.’⁷⁰ The prospect of a five-hour journey on a small boat gave all on board the chance to canvas the royal visitor, who had no hope of escape. For the Prince, this was the ‘worst day of the whole trip, certainly the most jarring to the nerves.’ Their scheme, he maintained, was to ‘get poor little me all to themselves’ while enjoying ‘an oyster & champagne orgy.’⁷¹ Nonetheless, Halsey thought that they were all ‘very anxious to be polite’ with the exception of Lang, intent on urging the Prince to subscribe to a state

⁶⁸ ‘WALSH ISLAND’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 26 June 1920, p. 13.

⁶⁹ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/43. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 27 June 1920.

⁷⁰ NLA, MS 9185, copy of ‘The unofficial diary of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales visit to Australia, New Zealand and the colonies in the Atlantic and Pacific, March to October 1920, 1912-1938.’ Entry for 24 June 1920, p. 63.

⁷¹ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 329. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 24 June 1920.

drought loan, who showed ‘some signs of indignation when his request was not immediately acceded to.’⁷²

However, as the cruise wore on, all of the Ministers except Storey grew ‘toxy’ and to the royal party’s horror they were invited to participate in a sing-song.⁷³ Mountbatten recalled how the lunch descended into drinking games during which the ministerial delegation smashed many of the glasses and plates. ‘A sickly smile which spread over H.R.H.’s features was mistaken by the glee party as a smile of approval, so that they burst forth into another half a dozen songs, yelling at the unfortunate Staff to join in’, he recorded.⁷⁴ **Image 19**

Though the journey seemed to justify fears of the Prince becoming drawn into controversial matters by conniving politicians, the remainder of the Newcastle trip proved trouble-free. The local newspaper offered the perspective that many spectators had gathered in celebration of their community, declaring ‘this was Newcastle’s day out with a vengeance’, characterised by a ‘good humor [sic] which prevailed universally.’⁷⁵ This was held as a moment of some significance in the town’s history and local identity. ‘I feel as though something had happened’ said one ‘cynic’ afterwards, ‘I feel as if the world had turned upside down.’⁷⁶ No social or political discontentment at Walsh Island was discernible to Mountbatten, who wrote of the ‘genuine enthusiasm of the dockyard workers, and their pleased expression’ at seeing Edward.⁷⁷ Similar scenes took place during the inspection of the steel works of the Broken Hill Company, where he was ‘loudly cheered by great crowds, not only of the population of all sorts, but of the

⁷² RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/43. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 27 June 1920.

⁷³ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 329. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 24 June 1920.

⁷⁴ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 88. Entry for 24 June 1920.

⁷⁵ ‘AU REVOIR’, *The Newcastle Sun*, N.S.W., 26 June 1920, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 89. Entry for 25 June 1920.

gathered working men', recalled Halsey in surprise.⁷⁸ "' ___ [sic] but he's a nice bloke'" a 'wild and woolly gentleman' was heard to agree.⁷⁹

The trip confirmed earlier indications that there was widespread Australian support for the Prince even from what were perceived, from a British point of view, as unlikely sources such as trade unionists and workers. Grigg's focus on popular engagement via the medium of visual accessibility successfully convinced observers of the Prince's empathetic qualities and interest in the issues faced by the Australian working-classes. The *Newcastle Sun*, for example, accepted that exceptions could be made in the usually distasteful celebration of imperial pomp and privilege, provided that person upheld the duties of their office and exhibited appropriately egalitarian qualities. 'We revere our institutions and we revere the men and women who typify those institutions', the editor concluded, adding also 'we have a very genuine regard for the smiling English boy who has come to strengthen those bonds that bind Australia ... to the Union Jack.'⁸⁰

Although Halsey had written gloomily of how he 'would be glad when it was over', there was still a long way to go.⁸¹ Despite his week off-duty following the Melbourne leg of the tour, the Prince's health continued to fail. Speaking of the excessively busy itinerary, he likened himself to a 'man caught in a revolving door.'⁸² His staff encouraged him to eat breakfast, and to go to bed before midnight in an effort to ease the strain, but found this difficult to enforce. 'His conduct is irreproachable except in the matter of sleep, cigarettes and food' wrote Munro Ferguson to Stamfordham.⁸³ It was not long, however, before a solution presented itself.

⁷⁸ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/43. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 27 June 1920.

⁷⁹ 'AU REVOIR', *The Newcastle Sun*, N.S.W., 26 June 1920, p. 1. Punctuation in original.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ NLA, MFM M1179. Letter to 'Mother' from Halsey, 20 June 1920.

⁸² Windsor, *A king's story*, p. 160.

⁸³ NLA, MS 696/368. Letter to Stamfordham from Munro Ferguson, 26 June 1920.

As foreshadowed even during the preparatory stage, Grigg's concerns over the controversial side-by-side representation of British alongside Australian naval power continued to grow. Hughes' planned visit to Rabaul now seemed 'extremely objectionable.'⁸⁴ Grigg felt the event would prove controversial, as he perceived that 'the Australian navy is not going to be kept up afterwards', not to mention the potential criticism Hughes would attract for chaperoning the Prince while also making it clear that he did not intend to invite along members of the Opposition.⁸⁵ 'It is neither dignified nor politic for His Royal Highness to be associated with a piece of empty gesticulation which will impress nobody but may be a serious cause of embarrassment' he reprimanded Munro Ferguson.⁸⁶

As a safer alternative, the Rabaul visit and the preceding overland journey from South Australia to Queensland was substituted for a week or two in the 'backblocks'; a period of recreation, hunting and horse-riding hosted by the state's most prominent pastoral families. Edward felt this plan offered 'far more value than seeing a crowd of revolting black savages.'⁸⁷ The change in schedule was pitched as necessary for the Prince's health in the hope of throwing Hughes off the scent.

Accommodating nationalism in Western Australia

After leaving New South Wales, Edward gained little respite during the rough voyage across the Bight to Western Australia. 'He is not at all what you would call a good sailor' Halsey remarked.⁸⁸ H.M.S *Renown* arrived in Albany on 30 June, where they were welcomed by the newly appointed state Governor, Francis Newdegate, before

⁸⁴ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/49. Letter to Stamfordham from Grigg, 7 July 1920.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ NAA, A11052, 32. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from Grigg, 19 June 1920.

⁸⁷ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 354. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 16 July 1920.

⁸⁸ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/38. Letter to Stamfordham from Halsey, 27 June 1920.

continuing by rail to Perth. Munro Ferguson was formally represented from Western Australia onwards by Duncan-Hughes, his aide-de-camp. Nevertheless, in what was proving a regular idiosyncrasy, the overly zealous Newdegate caused consternation to the royal party by his evident wish to attend various functions and day trips alongside the Prince. Although prior to Edward's arrival he had been gently warned against seeking the Prince's company due to holding higher office, Newdegate made clear his position on federal interference in his relationship with the Crown. At first, he protested his innocence, claiming he thought 'a humble individual like myself would attract no attention in a new state where I am not well known' even when parading in the company of royalty.⁸⁹ He was given the benefit of the doubt, but it was not long before he annoyed Duncan-Hughes by making surprise appearances at the Prince's functions. After being assigned what was clearly an inferior seat position during a function, Duncan-Hughes had to conclude that Newdegate and the Nationalist Premier, James Mitchell, were consciously limiting the visibility of Commonwealth representatives.⁹⁰

A few days later the royal party travelled south to Fremantle, chiefly to atone for the earlier insult to the port's waterside workers. It seems no grudge was held, and the day of the Prince's visit was declared a public holiday, specifically so that 'local employees' could attend.⁹¹ Despite inclement weather, this must have contributed to participants' enjoyment of festivities. The Prince expressed mild regret over the itinerary and was careful to pay tribute to Fremantle's 'very fine' harbour.⁹² He visited more workers a few days later, during an inspection of the southern timber-getting region of Pemberton. This area was one of the first destinations set aside for the government's Group Settlement Scheme of 1921. Throughout the early 1920s, this Empire-wide scheme encouraged mainly British migrants to rural localities such as the

⁸⁹ NAA, A6678, R56. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Newdegate, 30 May 1920.

⁹⁰ NLA, MS 696/9088. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 10 July 1920.

⁹¹ 'FREMANTLE CELEBRATIONS', *The West Australian*, Perth, W.A., 25 June 1920, p. 6.

⁹² 'FREMANTLE'S TURN', *The Newcastle Sun*, N.S.W., 3 July 1920, p. 5.

ancient jarrah and karri forests of Western Australia. Incentives included assisted passages and generous land leases if the land could be successfully cleared by collective labour. According to Everard Cotes, one of the H.M.S. *Renown* journalists, it was hoped that the export of produce and timber fuelled by migrant labour would be enabled by both the international port at Fremantle and the newly-established Trans Australian Railway linking Western Australia to the eastern states.⁹³ Like other states, the Western Australian government's resentment towards the federal presence was overruled by their desire to market their state to the visiting party on their own terms.

The most dramatic incident of the tour occurred on the return journey from Pemberton, on the railway line between Jandalup and Bridgetown. In the aftermath of heavy rain, the rails buckled in the soft terrain, sending the last two carriages of the royal train containing the Prince's party and the Ministerial party hurtling sideways where they were dragged along for a short distance before coming to rest on the siding. Edward and Halsey were writing letters in the final carriage together, but were able to escape unscathed through a broken window. Had the train not just a moment before slowed to allow a cow to amble over the line, the results could have been disastrous for all concerned. 'We both thought our time had come', Halsey told his father.⁹⁴ Although it was not initially clear what had happened, all were delighted to find themselves uninjured and took the accident in good spirits. Mountbatten describes how, on going to the Prince's aid, he first passed up a 'precious cocktail shaker' and joked about having accomplished something 'not on the official programme.'⁹⁵

The inner retinue were quick to find some light relief at the expense of their hosts, particularly the Minister for Works, William George ('a most offensive &

⁹³ Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, pp. 145-46.

⁹⁴ NLA, MFM M1179. Letter to 'Father' from Halsey, 7 July 1920.

⁹⁵ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 101. Entry for 5 July 1920.

revolting old rustic who we loathe’) who had been caught in the ‘convenience’, emerging in déshabillé.⁹⁶ The Premier did not suffer any injury, noted Mountbatten, ‘owing, perhaps to his natural rotundity.’⁹⁷ To Freda, the Prince boasted he would rather encounter a ‘cushy accident like today than make a speech at any time.’⁹⁸ But he does nonetheless seem to have been rattled, later writing to his mother how he loathed being on the train and had “the wind up me” the whole time!!⁹⁹ Still, his initial calm on emerging from the wreckage, in the presence of the anxious media contingent, ensured his public popularity suffered no harm. ‘His coolness has gained him much admiration’, wrote Duncan-Hughes.¹⁰⁰ And when it reappeared in the local press, Mountbatten’s account of rescuing the Prince had been resoundingly embellished, demonstrating again the profound influence the particular linguistic and stylistic properties of the H.M.S. *Renown* journalists wielded over local perceptions of events. In a manner reminiscent of a music hall skit, the *West Australian* claimed the Prince was discovered ‘reclining amid the wreck of the costly carriage, smiling and smoking a cigar. “Hurt!” he cried in response to anxious enquiries through the overhead windows. “Bless your heart, no! And I’m glad to say the whisky flask is not broken either.”’¹⁰¹ Although barely credible, accounts of the Prince’s flippancy further encouraged public perceptions of his down-to-earth nature. Returning to Perth, Cotes perceived that ‘the crowd plainly showed its impression that he had taken a bit of rough luck in the best Australian manner.’¹⁰²

There was however much wringing of hands from the West Australian authorities, who were understandably ‘terribly woe-begone [sic]’ that such a thing

⁹⁶ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 344. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 5 July 1920.

⁹⁷ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 101. Entry for 5 July 1920.

⁹⁸ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 344. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 5 July 1920.

⁹⁹ RA, QM/PRIV/CC09. Letter to Queen Mary from Edward, Prince of Wales, 4 August 1920.

¹⁰⁰ NLA, MS 696/9087. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 10 July 1920.

¹⁰¹ ‘THE ROYAL TRAIN’, *The West Australian*, Perth, W.A., 6 July 1920, p. 7.

¹⁰² Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, p. 153.

should have happened in their state.¹⁰³ In the immediate aftermath of the accident, some feared it had been an attack on the prince by an anti-British group. The Victorian police officer George Howard, for example, had previously warned of the large numbers of ‘dangerous individuals in the Western State, some of whom the Police regard as being “up to anything.”’¹⁰⁴ And although a small pilot train had preceded the royal train on the day of the accident, and ‘line watchers’ were stationed along the track, the lighter carriages passed safely over the warped rails.¹⁰⁵ Despite the incident proving to be nothing more sinister than an accident, Munro Ferguson was quick to blame the local officials. As he put it, ‘the royal train itself was crowded up with anyone who could gain a footing on it’, pointing to the ‘droves’ of Western Australian parliamentarians and dignitaries ‘joy riding’ on board. He concluded, rather unfairly, that the accident was attributable to a ‘considerable carelessness and that “casualness” which is often a characteristic of newly developed communities.’¹⁰⁶ The royal party quickly made a number of public statements to anxious Western Australians testifying to their good health.

Following this spike in the state’s publicity, Western Australians living along later points of the tour could hardly be unaware of the Prince’s impending arrival. The royal party were unsure of their reception among the goldfields population at Northam, Coolgardie and then Kalgoorlie. Strikes the previous year spoke of the tension between unionised and non-union workers, although the contemporary press indicates that the population was at least receptive to the arrival of the Prince. ‘Hats off to Prince Eddie, we hear that he’s a sport’, wrote ‘Axeman’ of Northam, offering to ‘fill him up well with beer’, give him a good welcome from the local ‘flappers’ (nothing how ‘he often

¹⁰³ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/49. Letter to Stamfordham from Grigg, 7 July 1920.

¹⁰⁴ NLA, MS 696/4332. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Howard, 10 May 1920.

¹⁰⁵ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 100. Entry for 5 July 1920.

¹⁰⁶ NLA, MS 696/149. Letter to King George V from Munro Ferguson, 15 July 1920.

smelt powder before'), sustain him with a locally-made meat pie and a tour of the local drinking dens.¹⁰⁷ Despite these good intentions, the royal party perceived the response that eventuated as decidedly subdued, and the 'people weren't over-enthusiastic.'¹⁰⁸

Coolgardie, in particular, wrote Cotes, suffered from a declining population, although:

all that were left had turned out to meet the Prince. It was a curious assemblage, largely consisting of men past work and women and children, who still cling to wooden shanties fast falling into decay, amidst spoil heaps and ruins of fine public buildings, a great place once but a sad spectacle now.¹⁰⁹

Mountbatten reported here that the local Australian Workers Union (AWU) members had forbidden their children to take part in a display, but that 'not one' local child was missing in the final 'burlesque.'¹¹⁰ Generally, it has been difficult to calculate to what extent previous dissenters stood firm in their avowal to boycott the Prince's tour, or prevent their children from participating. Unquestionably, some did not attend. In this case, however, Mountbatten goes on to explain how a well known AWU member was in attendance, and 'wearing a red tie.' When asked why he had come, he explained that his two children were in the procession and 'the missus made me come to look after them.' While this man made an attempt to signify his political stance with his clothing, he was nonetheless present. Similarly, another man in the crowd refused to remove his hat in the presence of the Prince.¹¹¹ We can perhaps attribute this to the reasons already discussed; that the provision of a paid holiday and the enthusiastic participation of other sections of communities may have provided an incentive to attend.

¹⁰⁷ 'TO OUR DIGGER PRINCE', *Goomalling-Dowerin Mail*, Goomalling/Dowerin, W.A., 25 June 1920, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 347. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 10 July 1920.

¹⁰⁹ Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, p. 155.

¹¹⁰ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, pp. 103-04. Entry for 9 July 1920.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Although sometimes to considerable strain, the royal party had accommodated with good grace the fervent ambitions of local politicians to exploit the promotional opportunities of the tour. At Kalgoorlie the royal party boarded the Trans Australia railway for the three-day journey to Adelaide, South Australia. Privately, Edward could barely face ‘the mere thought of tackling another capital’ so soon.¹¹²

Promoting expansion in South Australia

The party disembarked next at Cook, a tiny railway rest stop and connection to Ooldea, a distant mission under the management of the anthropologist Daisy Bates. Around sixty male and female Aboriginal residents had been transferred by train to meet the royal entourage. Here a range of what were described as ‘weird ceremonial dances’ were performed for the edification of the visitors.¹¹³ This was Edward’s only direct contact with Aboriginal people during the tour, in itself illustrative of dismissive early twentieth century attitudes towards Australia’s Indigenous population. Bates, thought by Halsey a ‘most wonderful Englishwoman’, subscribed to the prevailing official view of Aboriginal people in place since the colonial era – that of a race in moral and physical decline.¹¹⁴ As Cotes recounted, ‘these wretched people appear to be rapidly dying out despite liberal grants from the Commonwealth and State Governments to educate and feed them.’¹¹⁵ Bates evidently wished to highlight the novelty of the situation, so

¹¹² Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 347. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 11 July 1920.

¹¹³ Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, p. 160-61.

¹¹⁴ Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell, “‘Bring this paper to the Good Governor’: Aboriginal Petitioning in Britain’s Australian Colonies”, in Saliha Belmessous (ed.), *Native claims: indigenous law against empire, 1500-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 182-203, p. 183; RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/53. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 17 July 1920.

¹¹⁵ Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, p. 160-61.

instructed those present to do ‘everything as if they were in their wild state again ... there was not a dull moment’, she recalled.¹¹⁶ **Image 20**

The royal party’s perceptions of the ceremony demonstrate their comfortable understanding of themselves as topping a racial hierarchy. Halsey recorded a prejudicial view in detail: ‘they are less like human beings, both in looks and customs, than any other savage race I have seen in any part of the world.’¹¹⁷ The Prince was in agreement, describing the performers as ‘the nearest thing to monkeys I’ve ever seen.’¹¹⁸

Later in the journey across the Nullarbor, a group of cameleers from the Pujab, then part of the British Raj, also had the misfortune to come across the royal party during a rest stop. Cotes’ account of the encounter may be read as representative of the royal party’s views as to the superiority of the Caucasian race. Speaking of the presence of several ‘Eurasian’ children in the group, Cotes found them to be:

a reminder of those racial problems of which the people of Australia take constant thought when they determine to develop the natural resources of their wonderful land, as far as may be, by white labour alone.¹¹⁹

From here, the royal party travelled onward into South Australia. Following a cordial welcome from the Nationalist Premier, Henry Barwell, at the border on 10 July, the train proceeded to Adelaide, where the Prince and the newly-appointed South Australian Governor, Archibald Weigall, participated in a royal progress through the city. Duncan-Hughes was difficult to impress, writing that the ‘cheering was perhaps not so great as in the larger capitals’, although he attributed this to the ‘rather undemonstrative’ state disposition.¹²⁰ Rather than simply a natural diffidence, it seems instead that Adelaide people had exercised great care in reviewing the ‘mistakes’ of

¹¹⁶ ‘THE PRINCE OF WALES’, *Daily Telegraph* Launceston, Tas., 21 August 1920, p. 12.

¹¹⁷ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/53. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 17 July 1920.

¹¹⁸ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 348. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 11 July 1920.

¹¹⁹ Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, p. 160-61.

¹²⁰ NLA, MS 696/9089. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 21 July 1920.

other capital cities and, as the *Critic* urged, avoiding ‘an exuberance of enthusiasm.’¹²¹ The *Southern Cross* hoped that the ‘sober-minded’ citizenry would ‘restrain themselves within proper bounds in the displays of loyalty, and that the daily papers do not lose their heads as badly as their Melbourne and Sydney contemporaries.’¹²² Harry Blinman, the state organiser, had banned the public from throwing confetti at the Prince.¹²³

As well as a democratic disinclination for the fawning attitude seen in other cities, some South Australians perceived the inevitable imperial patriotic fervour as a danger to Australia’s future self-governing capabilities. The tour took place against a backdrop of protracted post-war speculation over how the Dominions should function within the Empire. Basil Long, one of the journalists from H.M.S. *Renown*, was to later record his observation that ‘the Australian is jealous of the right to govern himself and is resentful of dictation from outside. Imperialism in the conventional sense is most unpopular.’¹²⁴ Certainly, ALP Member Norman Makin had forcefully warned against the tour’s ‘jingoistic spirit’ that could lead to an Imperial Federation, and the corresponding contraction of self-government. He hoped that sympathy towards the Prince as an individual would be maintained, but also noted that ‘Australia for the Australians is what we want.’¹²⁵ Barwell’s remarks at the banquet concerning the desirability of a ‘unity authority for the Empire’ were reportedly met with ‘chilling silence.’¹²⁶ Even the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League questioned whether ‘so young and so undistinguished a man’ and one lacking any direct association with the AIF was worthy of the adulation and the “Digger Prince” sobriquet. Still, it concluded that a supposedly democratic monarchy was preferable to a republic and that the inoffensive Prince held qualities suitable for the role, being ‘nice looking, amiable,

¹²¹ ‘PERSONAL’, *Critic*, Adelaide, S.A., 30 June 1920, p. 7.

¹²² ‘TOPICS’, *Southern Cross*, Adelaide, S.A., 9 July 1920, p. 11.

¹²³ ‘PERSONAL’, *Critic*, Adelaide, S.A., 30 June 1920, p. 7.

¹²⁴ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 21 April 1921, p. 7611.

¹²⁵ ‘DANGER AHEAD’, *Daily Herald*, Adelaide, S.A., 5 January 1920, p. 4.

¹²⁶ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 21 April 1921, p. 7611.

well-behaved and not unreasonable lad.’ This was all very well, and preferable to allocating total power to one individual as in the case of a presidency, as long as the monarch posed no threat by his individual actions to the ‘hard-won liberties of the British people’ of the Dominions.¹²⁷

If Duncan-Hughes’ observation was correct, then perhaps the crowds in Adelaide during the Prince’s welcome did adopt a more circumspect attitude. However, it seems that mostly, the enthusiasm for both public festivities and the Prince as an individual won over most people’s objections. The *Southern Cross* journalists must have despaired of their colleagues at the *Register*, who pronounced the Prince, ‘with his fresh sparkling manliness, like the splendour of the morning.’¹²⁸ Also of interest is the way the *Register* perceived the Prince’s idealised attributes in racial terms. It identified ‘the beau-ideal of charming English manhood’, as being ‘fair of face, with that rich colouring put on by Britain’s climate, blue-eyed, fair-haired, of medium and graceful stature, fresh, radiant and altogether good looking.’¹²⁹ The supremacy and expansion of the white migrant population was also a source of preoccupation to Weigall, who was galvanised by the promotional opportunities offered by the Prince’s arrival.

Although South Australia had been first settled by European agriculturalists during the 1830s, Weigall felt the urgent need to swell the population with a ‘better class of immigrant’, sourced direct from the ‘mother country’ and tasked with further developing the wider fertile countryside for wheat production.¹³⁰ Knowing that the Prince’s utterances would be reproduced in global newspapers, he was eager to promote South Australia as an agricultural idyll and avoid any reference to a prevalent undercurrent of local workers’ discontent over industrial working conditions and

¹²⁷ “‘TOMMY’ PRINCE’, *Daily Herald*, Adelaide, S.A., 19 June 1920, p. 6.

¹²⁸ ‘OUR EMPIRE’S AMBASSADOR’, *The Register*, Adelaide, S.A., 12 July 1920, p. 7.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ ‘A vice-regal agriculturalist’, *Chronicle*, Adelaide, S.A., 12 June 1920, p. 29.

standards of living.¹³¹ To this end, the Governor influenced Grigg in drafting the Prince's speeches to favour instead the state's advantages. It would be wise, he suggested to 'devote the major portion of his remarks to congratulations on the wonderful rains of the last three weeks.'¹³²

So far, this chapter has considered the responses of mostly male politicians, radicals, servicemen and workers to the Prince. As the first state to extend the franchise to women voters, the South Australian section of the tour is an ideal point to give greater consideration to the presence of women throughout. Given the promotion of the tour as a public holiday, older or middle-aged women and their families made up a prominent proportion of the spectators in all states. In Melbourne, for example, Cotes observed that the 'extraordinary masses of people' comprised 'largely of women and children' as well as men.¹³³ Women, particularly those whose men had fought in the war, were generally treated with reverence by the press. In Warwick, Queensland, for example, the local newspaper solemnly described the 'loyal pilgrimage' of 1,000 regional women who had lost sons or husbands to view H.M.S. *Renown*.¹³⁴ In Tasmania, Cotes found 'the venerable Mrs. Roberts', an elderly woman with a union jack, to be the personification of feminine patriotic loyalty:

Many were the Mrs. Robertses, under different names, that these ceremonial occasions produced. One learned to look for them, figures full of years and honour, spirits erect in failing bodies, dim eyes lit by the old torch, frail arms carrying on the old tradition. Homage to Mrs. Roberts, war-worker ... She is a symbol of the race.¹³⁵

However, implicit in the attitudes of the press towards younger or unmarried women can be discerned a sense of uncertainty about the post-war excesses of youth

¹³¹ 'INDUSTRIAL TROUBLES', *Observer*, Adelaide, S.A., 5 June 1920, p. 19.

¹³² RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS. Box 3, 'Adelaide.' Letter to Grigg from Weigall, 2 July 1920.

¹³³ Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, p. 104.

¹³⁴ 'Loyal Pilgrimage', *Warwick Daily News*, Qld., 9 August 1920, p. 2.

¹³⁵ Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, p. 170.

and modernity. The majority of the press coverage surveyed for this chapter perpetuated sexist stereotypes of the ‘goggly-eyed flappers’, as excitable and wanton opportunists baying for the blood of their ‘Prince Charming.’¹³⁶ ‘Never saw such a leg show in my life’ commented the editor of the *Nambucca and Bellinger News*, describing how Sydney’s ‘painted and powered darlings’ mobbed the Prince’s car.¹³⁷

However, such biases were not universal. The Melbourne *Australasian* provided a more cerebral summary of the Prince’s persona, and in doing so forcefully illustrated the particular educational and social aspirations held by some democratically-minded Australian women of 1920. ‘The standard of manhood expected by women nowadays is a very high one’, it explained, remarking that:

Neither rank nor riches nor beauty of person will dazzle women ... not till they have discerned behind the suavity of manner and grace of bearing the virile qualities that make a man and the earnestness and purposefulness that make a great man will they yield their tribute of homage and affection to any Prince.¹³⁸

Although well-represented in crowds, women were almost invisible in the tour’s formalities. Throughout the preparations Grigg had attempted to press upon officials that Edward particularly enjoyed formal functions where women were present, but nonetheless the Prince found himself more often in the company of men. This reflects the composition of governing bodies of the time and the tour’s particular focus on the visibility of returned servicemen and not female war workers. This was nonetheless controversial and perceived as ‘a slight’ by socially-prominent women and those who had contributed to the war effort.¹³⁹ In Paddington, New South Wales, for example, the

¹³⁶ ‘AU REVOIR’, *The Newcastle Sun*, N.S.W., 26 June 1920, p. 1.

¹³⁷ ‘Women and the Prince’, *Nambucca and Bellinger News*, N.S.W., 9 July 1920, p. 1.

¹³⁸ ‘PRINCE CHARMING’, *The Australasian*, Melbourne, Vic., 5 June 1920, p. 37.

¹³⁹ ‘A SLIGHT ON WOMEN AND THE PRINCE’, *The Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times*, Albury, N.S.W., 7 May 1920, p. 2.

Soldiers' Mothers, Wives and Relatives Victory Association wrote in outrage to Hughes to protest their 'right to a place' in the arrangements, but to no avail.¹⁴⁰

In South Australia, more enlightened attitudes towards the prominent place of women are discernible in comparison to all other states. Here, the state organisers deliberately aimed to make the Prince's reception 'as representative as possible.'¹⁴¹ South Australia was the only state host to a 'purely feminine display of loyalty', consisting of a People's Reception held in Adelaide's Exhibition Building that allowed 4,000 women, comprising war workers, members of women's societies and the families of servicemen, to view the Prince.¹⁴² Although Mountbatten failed to distinguish any 'striking instances of individual charm', and criticised the Lady Mayoress' delivery of her speech in a 'frightened whisper', as a gesture of equality the event seems well-received.¹⁴³

It was no secret that the Prince enjoyed and sought out the individual company of women. Although he professed to be pining throughout the tour for Freda, the Prince's spirits rallied when dancing with attractive women or being mothered by the wives of his hosts. Throughout the tour, his hosts sought to present him with the cream of local Society women at private dining and dancing parties. On one occasion in Adelaide, Lady Grace Weigall 'insisted on asking a dozen girls in to Government House.'¹⁴⁴ It was noted, perceptively as it would later transpire, that he liked the witty informal women capable of a 'bright repartee for any remark of his.'¹⁴⁵ He was careful not to convey this to Freda. 'The women here can dance, though Christ they bore me &

¹⁴⁰ NAA, A2, 1920/1113 PART 26. Telegram to Hughes from J. Connell and E.J. Walsh, 6 May 1920.

¹⁴¹ 'WOMEN WAR WORKERS' STRONG POST', *Daily Herald*, Adelaide, S.A., 8 July 1920, p. 3.

¹⁴² 'PRINCE'S TRIBUTE', *Observer*, Adelaide, S.A., 12 June 1920, p. 38.

¹⁴³ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 110. Entry for 15 July 1920.

¹⁴⁴ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 351. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 15 July 1920.

¹⁴⁵ 'Ladies' Letter', *Table Talk*, Melbourne, Vic., 10 June 1920, p. 27.

there's only one who could be called pretty' he said of another gathering organised in Melbourne by the Hughes'.¹⁴⁶

It is possible, although not explicitly documented in any way, that the Prince enjoyed several liaisons with the greatest discretion. Apparently only half in jest, Mountbatten recalled a gathering in Tasmania on which the Prince insisted on attending, leaving his friends to ponder 'which of the ministers' wives', or possibly waitresses', attraction was at the bottom of it.'¹⁴⁷ Robert Wainwright has explored his reported fondness for Sydney socialite Mollee Little, a close friend of his brother's lover Sheila Loughborough.¹⁴⁸ In public, Edward also turned his attention to women beyond Society. Duncan Hughes noted how at Adelaide's Palais de Danse, the Prince spent a few minutes dancing with 'a totally different class (A.B.s shop-girls, etc.) to that which he usually meets.'¹⁴⁹ This, the *Journal* reported, generated the 'wildest excitement' among attendees.¹⁵⁰ His likely contrived actions seemed to indicate his democratic regard for others, and his ease in striking up companionable relationships with vigorous women.

All in all, Edward was a busy man. Despite some brief respite at Government House, the strain of never-ending official engagements was evident. 'I'm such a wreck really', Edward confided to Freda, 'it's quite pathetic & entre nous I never really feel quite well.'¹⁵¹ 'He did not smile', 'Lady Kitty' remarked in her column in the *Observer*,

¹⁴⁶ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, pp. 313-14. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 30 May 1920.

¹⁴⁷ Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922*, p. 113. Entry for 21 July 1920.

¹⁴⁸ Wainwright, Robert, *Sheila: the Australian beauty who bewitched British society* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2014), pp. 98-106. Although Mollee's first baby was born three years later in 1923, this did little to dispel the rumour beloved of Sydney Society that the Prince had fathered an illegitimate Australian child.

¹⁴⁹ NLA, MS 696/9118. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 21 July 1920. 'A.B.' is legal jargon meaning 'ordinary.'

¹⁵⁰ 'PRINCE'S PARTNER', *The Journal*, Adelaide, S.A., 17 July 1920, p. 18.

¹⁵¹ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 354. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 18 July 1920.

‘turning his glance ... almost automatically. He looked the tiredest thing on earth.’¹⁵²

The extensive public engagement rolled on regardless, Weigall finding the visit ‘an unqualified success from every point of view.’¹⁵³ Hardly fortified, the Prince’s party departed Adelaide on 16 July for the two-day sea journey to Tasmania.

Instilling military patriotism in Tasmania

The Tasmanian tour could not be said to have been equally successful. ‘Nice people these Tasmanians’, the Prince reflected, ‘but naturally on the dull side as its all so out of the way.’¹⁵⁴ Duncan-Hughes agreed that the level of interest and excitement much reduced. This he attributed to the confusion over the Prince’s movements and lack of communication between the Governor, William Allardyce, and the Nationalist Premier Walter Lee and organising officials.¹⁵⁵ In contrast to the unrelenting self-aggrandisement of most other officials encountered, Allardyce’s reticence coupled with a mix-up over who should officiate at the landing point meant there was great confusion on the Prince’s arrival.¹⁵⁶ In addition, he had by then all but lost his voice and so did not speak with the exception of some brief words at the state luncheon.¹⁵⁷

Tasmania did have one notable accomplishment however. As noted in the previous chapter, one of the most critical elements in the success of popular-focused activities during the tour was the constant presence of children, the next generation of imperial supporters. The most obvious way they participated was in the mass group demonstrations that appeared all along the itinerary, where several schools would join together on local sport or showgrounds to form outsize pictures or text. In some cities,

¹⁵² ‘WOMEN’S SPHERE’, *Observer*, Adelaide, S.A., 24 July 1920, p. 38.

¹⁵³ NAA, A11052, 8. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Weigall, 20 July 1920.

¹⁵⁴ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 355. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 20 July 1920.

¹⁵⁵ NLA, MS 696/9123. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 26 July 1920.

¹⁵⁶ NAA, A6678, R29/2. Letter to White from D. Addison, 2 August 1920.

¹⁵⁷ NLA, MS 696/9123. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 26 July 1920.

school children were given more prominent positions to view the Prince in motorcades and royal processions.¹⁵⁸ Frank Tate, the Director of Melbourne's Education Department, saw the tour's objective as 'to strengthen the hold of the Kingship...especially in the minds and hearts of the people who come from the little homes.'¹⁵⁹ Tate recognised that private talk of the tour 'around the dinner table' within families would have for months have heightened anticipation of the royal arrival, as would the 'little sacrifices' made by parents in order to 'turn out the youngsters creditably.' From this, he concluded, it was 'a small step to keen appreciation and demonstrative loyalty, especially when, as in this case, the representative of the Kingship has exhibited so many personal qualities that have endeared him to the people.'¹⁶⁰

Although many workers and supporters of the labour movement had in the months before protested against this large-scale propagandistic impulse in favour of the dominant political ideology and some intended to prevent their children from participating, this fervent body of opinion seems to have dwindled after the royal visitor arrived. The younger generations and their families, many of whom were ex-servicemen, were very much in evidence. As Edward noted in Western Australia, he felt 'quite safe in expecting to find diggers & schoolchildren everywhere.'¹⁶¹

The notion of youth participation emerges particularly strongly in an examination of the Tasmanian section of the tour, and offers some insight into gendered expectations of Australian citizenship in 1920. Here responsible metropolitan citizens were asked to act as 'father and mother' by accommodating and taking care of 'country

¹⁵⁸ NLA, MS 696/9117. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 21 July 1920.

¹⁵⁹ NLA, MS 1924/1/3954. Letter to Brookes from Tate, 4 June 1920. This is taken to mean working-class homes.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 342. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 4 July 1920.

children' during the visit.¹⁶² As the *Mercury* explained, the visit was of the greatest importance for children, as:

It will remain longer in their memories, to influence them, one may hope, in the direction of loyalty to the mighty Empire to which they belong, and which it will behove them in future to help in preserving ... they may see him, and realise that he is as human a being as themselves ... he may see them and understand what fine youngsters Tasmania can breed.¹⁶³

As future mothers and fathers and tomorrow's monarchists, ideas surrounding the maintenance of the healthy Australian population were particularly prominent. The presence of children emphasised for the Prince a particular Australian identity; a young, pioneering and, most importantly, healthy population ably exhibiting the prescribed biological identity critical to the future success of the nation. In Hobart, for example, some 6,000 male and female children appeared in a large group demonstration that incorporated the fitness or 'physical culture' education that would reach its zenith during the 1930s and early 1940s.¹⁶⁴ Charlotte MacDonald has argued that following the war, physical activity and the democratisation of beauty became a force for social improvement, creating a greater distance between the broken bodies and destruction of the earlier decades.¹⁶⁵ This also implied future reproductive health. Accordingly, Bert Ive's film of the Hobart demonstration was careful to assure viewers, possibly those living as far away as Britain, that 'the Tasmanian schoolchildren are known for their rosy cheeks.'¹⁶⁶ **Image 21**

The presentation of Australians as physically superior was supported also by the way militarism played a central role in shaping the future generations. Angela

¹⁶² 'COUNTRY CHILDREN AND THE PRINCE'S VISIT', *World*, Hobart, Tas., 30 April 1920, p. 2.

¹⁶³ 'CHILDREN AND THE PRINCE', *The Mercury*, Hobart, Tas., 10 May 1920, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, beautiful and modern: national fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935-1960* (Wellington, N.Z.: Bridget Williams Books, 2011), p. 12.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁶ Ive, *Through Australia with the Prince of Wales*.

Woollacott has argued that by 1920 definitions of manliness came to centre on ‘physical strength, sporting prowess, and patriotic and military preparedness.’¹⁶⁷ As elsewhere in Australia, the Tasmanian section of the tour featured youth cadets such as the Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts. By the 1930s, Edward would become the most prominent patron of this group.¹⁶⁸ Established by soldier Robert Baden-Powell in England in 1908, the movement was adopted in Australia as a method of training boys and adolescents in collective identity, bush skills and authoritarian drill; qualities suitable for military service. Crotty explains the particular appeal of the Scouts to Australian boys as its resonance with ‘secular and militaristic ideals of manliness’, presided over as it was by Baden-Powell as an inspirational white British hero.¹⁶⁹ This desirable combination of sentiment and military fervour was also manifest in a fictional tale by Pauline Eddy published in the *Sydney Mail*. Tate would have likely approved of a mother’s words to her son:

Listen sonny, he is just the very best Prince in all the world – better even than the Prince Charming we read about in your fairy book! One day, when you are a man, he will be King, and you will fight for him just as bravely as your grandfather and daddy fought for their King!¹⁷⁰

Image 22

Certainly, participation was memorable for some. One woman seeking an invitation for her nieces to a ball held in the Prince’s honour remarked, such celebrations could only be ‘an event in the lives of our young folk.’¹⁷¹ Even at a distance of some years, Edith Forshaw later recalled how as a young girl she and her

¹⁶⁷ Angela Woollacott, ‘Gender and sexuality’, in Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds.), *Australia’s Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 312-35, p. 316.

¹⁶⁸ Allen Warren, ‘Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides, and an imperial ideal’, in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and popular culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 232-56, p. 241.

¹⁶⁹ Crotty, *Making the Australian male*, p. 199.

¹⁷⁰ ‘PRINCE CHARMING’, *Sydney Mail*, N.S.W., 7 July 1920, p. 21.

¹⁷¹ NAA, A2, 1920/1113 PART 26. Letter to W. Massy-Greene from J.A. Menzies, 24 May 1920.

sister participated in a Sydney display wearing specially-made white and red-trimmed dresses: 'we thought we were just it.'¹⁷²

These responses indicate the importance of the tour in personal recollections of family and childhood, and as a milestone in the collective historical memory of a community, but of course do not necessarily equate to the fortification of imperial loyalty as hoped for by Tate. On the other hand, Tasmania's concern with an outward display of patriotism and biological robustness seems to have been successfully imparted to the royal retinue. As Cotes mused towards the end of the tour 'the meaning of all we saw abides in those men and women and children working out their lot and their lives far from the home of the race, but standing, and ready to stand again, for its flag and its ideals.'¹⁷³

By this stage, it seemed necessary to further delay the journey to Queensland due to the Prince's continued ill-health, but the party agreed to proceed given that this section was of 'such great political importance.'¹⁷⁴ After returning to H.M.S *Renown* at Hobart, the Prince sailed for Sydney on 23 July and immediately departed for Queensland by rail.

Subduing political tension in Queensland

Queensland of 1920 was the most politically volatile of the states with a powerful labour movement and an ALP government that had opposed conscription. In the absence of the Premier, 'Red Ted' Theodore, the royal party had been warned to tread cautiously around the next two highest-ranking officials, John Fihelly, the Acting

¹⁷² MLSLNSW, MSS 7197, Harry Hawkins and Edith May Forshaw - 'All Australians Had Plenty of Money and Gold Teeth: a digger's diary: his daughter's memoirs', unpublished manuscript collated by Amy Auster and Arron Wood, 2002.

¹⁷³ Cotes, *Down under with the prince*, p. 248.

¹⁷⁴ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/60. Letter to King George V from Grigg, 7 August 1920.

Premier, and William Lennon, the Lieutenant-Governor, who were to perform the official role of hosting the state visit. Even more so than other states, here the Prince was charged with winning over a population seen as especially prone to radical beliefs, and potentially without the support and protection of his hosts. Yet as previously, their fears again proved to be unfounded and much of the supposed disloyalty seemed to exist only in the imagination of the conservative press.¹⁷⁵ When officially greeting the Prince at the state border at Wallangarra, Grigg identified an ‘intense’ feeling, describing how both Fihelly and Lennon were ‘extremely nervous’ and ‘showed from the first that they meant to be absolutely correct.’¹⁷⁶ Grigg perceived that, in the wake of the success of the tour thus far, the nation’s attention had sharpened towards Queensland’s reception of the Prince at the finale. ‘All Australia was watching it and Queensland itself was nervous, like a person who felt under a cloud and determined to justify himself’, he wrote to the King.¹⁷⁷

Following the careful selection of host towns, the precedence given to certain types of activities was critical. The Prince’s first state engagement was to praise the government’s support of returned servicemen, in light of criticism of a supposed ‘lack of sympathy’ for them on the part of the Labor Party.¹⁷⁸ Accordingly, the royal train proceeded to Pikedale soldier settlement at Amiens on the Darling Downs. The Soldier Settlement Scheme was a government initiative with similar migration objectives to the Group Settlement Scheme, as introduced to the Prince in Western Australia. It offered returned soldiers the opportunity to attain ‘landed independence’ by establishing small regional farms. Across the country, nearly 40,000 were granted blocks of land via a long-term loan. As Larsson has pointed out, the notion of being a self-employed farmer

¹⁷⁵ ‘THE DISLOYAL STATE’, *World*, Hobart, Tas., 27 March 1920, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/60. Letter to King George V from Grigg, 7 August 1920.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ RA, EVIIPWH/PS/VISOV/1920/AUS/ Box 2, ‘Comptroller to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, Australia 1920 main file.’ Letter to Milner from Munro Ferguson, 10 January 1920.

was attractive to many Australians in the post-war period, especially those who were disabled or struggled otherwise in mainstream urban employment.¹⁷⁹ In its account of the stop, the *Queensland Times* perpetuated the notion of successful agrarian post-war lives, enthusing that ‘a splendid stirring note of patriotism was struck by these sturdy “diggers” and their womenfolk.’¹⁸⁰ The reality was somewhat different. While this productivity ostensibly stimulated imperial trade, reports throughout the 1920s reveal that the soldier settlements often suffered the same insolvency as the group schemes.¹⁸¹

The Prince held some misgivings about the arrival in Brisbane. ‘Somehow I’m full of apprehensions as we’ll be up against the bolshies properly & the acting premier ... who met us at the state boundary this morning, is the foulest & most infamous looking cut-throat Irish R. C. that I’ve ever seen!!’ he told Freda.¹⁸² Yet again, the royal party’s fears did not eventuate. The Prince’s cordial meeting with the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Bartholomew Cattaneo, and the pro-conscription Roman Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, James Duhig, was characterised by a certain studied casualness, and did much to finally douse rumours of the supposed ‘disloyalty’ of the Catholic community. Here the two men ‘went out of their way to express the loyalty and devotion’ of Australian Roman Catholics to the throne.¹⁸³ This swell of popular imperialist sentiment that typified the tour had, at least ostensibly, the power to smooth political and religious difference.

Neither were the ‘bolshies’ much in evidence. Even Duncan-Hughes was pleasantly startled by the enthusiasm demonstrated. ‘The better type of Queenslander is delighted that the much-talked-of Bolshevik element has (at any rate temporarily) either

¹⁷⁹ Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs*, p. 108. British ex-servicemen were also eligible to apply for the scheme.

¹⁸⁰ ‘THE PRINCE’S VISIT’, *Queensland Times*, Ipswich, Qld., 27 July 1920, p. 5.

¹⁸¹ Richard Waterhouse, ‘Settling the Land’, in Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds.), *Australia’s Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 54-77, p. 69.

¹⁸² Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 357. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 26 July 1920.

¹⁸³ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/60. Letter to King George V from Grigg, 7 August 1920.

ceased to exist or gone into retirement' he wrote.¹⁸⁴ To his mother, the Prince enthused that 'even real Bolshies have condescended to say & do nice things'¹⁸⁵ To top it all off, the greatest surprise was Lennon and Fihelly's public demonstration of their personal and ardent support of the Prince. The usually humourless Duncan-Hughes evoked a comic occasion when Lennon was overcome with heightened fervour for the Prince's personal appeal; "I consider this young man" (he cried) "to be a brick, a perfect brick!" (dashing his cigar on the table).¹⁸⁶ Fihelly also went to great lengths to convey his regard, chartering a private plane in order to pursue the Prince to the state border to say his goodbyes. Duncan-Hughes perceived that Fihelly's glowing treatment of the Prince came as:

a surprise to many; he is not trusted by his political opponents, and some seem doubtful as to how long his "conversion" will last ... he is quick to realise the great hold which the Prince has immediately acquired over all classes.¹⁸⁷

Like his colleagues elsewhere across the nation, the politically-astute Fihelly was prepared to overlook the political and religious symbolism of the royal visitor in order to greet him on equitable terms. The opportunity to appeal to Australians of all classes in order to cultivate nationalism was powerfully manifest in the publicity associated with the visit. Speaking of the way Australians joined the war effort 'without asking why', Fihelly asserted that 'the people of Australia are building up a great nation; and without always asking why, the people at home should help us develop our great country.'¹⁸⁸ It was also evident that the spectacle surrounding the Prince reflected becomingly on the host party, and quelled wild stories of an impending Bolshevik-style uprising among the workers. In the state Legislative Assembly, Nationalist member Arthur Moore remarked that before the visit, the government had been 'shaking in their

¹⁸⁴ NLA, MS 696/9096. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 2 August 1920.

¹⁸⁵ RA, QM/PRIV/CC09. Letter to Queen Mary from Edward, Prince of Wales, 4 August 1920.

¹⁸⁶ NLA, MS 696/9129. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 2 August 1920.

¹⁸⁷ NLA, MS 696/9097. Letter to Munro Ferguson from Duncan-Hughes, 2 August 1920.

¹⁸⁸ 'BRISBANE DAY BY DAY', *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 5 August 1920, p. 24.

shoes' over the 'Bolshevik element' but had discovered that it was in reality 'not so strong.'¹⁸⁹

Having conquered Queensland, the royal party realised with some relief that the end of the tour was nigh. From 6 August, the Prince, Halsey, Thomas, Legh and Mountbatten were given two weeks' leave free from official duties. They spent these socialising and riding south through several outback pastoral properties in northern New South Wales.¹⁹⁰ As we have seen, this 'backblocks' tour was a substitute for the planned trip to Rabaul, New Guinea but was not without its own complications. Although the objective was to affect a casual stay in privately owned pastoral properties, this stage of the tour inevitably attracted a political edge given the opportunities evident for both labour and nationalist interests. The inland visit was specifically designed to exclude the opportunistic Australian prime minister. As Grigg explained to the Governor-General, both Hughes and Storey wished to accompany the Prince, thus placing him 'perpetually between the two political fires.'¹⁹¹ Hughes was willing to abandon the idea but refused to let Storey go alone, given the potential for wooing the workers' and shearers' vote.

Eventually Edward was allowed to recuperate in the company of his entourage, although he never fully relaxed. He himself was all too aware of differing perceptions of himself in his role as representative of the Crown. Following a sumptuous dinner prepared at Canonbar Station by a leading Sydney chef and having been serenaded by a professional jazz pianist, he still perceived himself as an actor in a performance, complaining to Freda:

Oh! Why must it always be the P. of W. sweetie instead of just plain David sometimes? A fat lot of good it's been trying to show people out here for nearly 3 months that I'm only human & abhor any form

¹⁸⁹ Queensland Legislative Assembly, 'Debates', 10 December 1920, p. 643.

¹⁹⁰ The Prince was hosted among others by the McLeods of Canonbar station and the Bells of Coochin Coochin station.

¹⁹¹ NAA, A11052, 8. Telegram to Munro Ferguson from [?]Grigg, 20 July 1920.

of blatant advertisement of opulence.¹⁹²

Following the slaying of innumerable native animals, the royal party re-joined H.M.S. *Renown* at Sydney for further socialising and some much-reduced official duties. The inner retinue enjoyed a marked sense of liberation, having completed the tour largely unscathed. Halsey claimed ‘intense relief’ at the tour’s success, but noted also the ‘very great strain on the Prince and everyone else.’¹⁹³ Nevertheless, Edward later mused that during the tour he came fully to understand:

the varied burdens of duty that lie upon a Prince of Wales. Lonely drives through tumultuous crowds, the almost daily inspections of serried ranks of veterans, the inexhaustible supplies of cornerstones to be laid, the commemorative trees to be planted, deputations to be met, and everywhere the sad visits to hospital wards, every step bringing me face to face with some inconsolable tragedy calling for a heartening word from me, and always more hands to shake than a dozen Princes could have coped with.¹⁹⁴

But there were further compensations, even on the long journey home. H.M.S. *Renown* departed Sydney Harbour on 19 August for England via Hawaii, Acapulco and Panama, with a series of leisurely stops in the West Indies at Trinidad, Demerara, Grenada, St Lucia, Dominica, Montserrat and Antigua, arriving back in Portsmouth on 10 October.

This chapter has provided a narrative for the tensions and triumphs of Edward’s royal tour of Australia, as enacted across six states between May and August 1920. Overall, although Australia’s relations were avowedly loyal to Britain, both politicians and citizens sought to adapt the tour as an opportunity to pursue Australian local and national goals within broader imperial boundaries. Twenty years after federation, each Australia state possessed a strong individual identity, sense of independent government and wish to market its attractions to prospective migrants, and the world at large, on its

¹⁹² Edward, Prince of Wales, *Letters from a prince*, p. 366. Letter to Dudley Ward from Edward, Prince of Wales, 10 August 1920.

¹⁹³ RA, PS/PSO/GV/C/O/1548A/67. Letter to King George V from Halsey, 11 August 1920.

¹⁹⁴ Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 160.

own terms. By the same token, royal tour organisers across the country influenced the itinerary in attempts to assuage concerns over Australia's defensive position, and avoid areas of social, religious and political contestation in favour of forging overarching consensus.

Although the royal tour was without doubt an active official campaign to instil imperial ideology through the medium of public spectacle, curiously this encountered little practical opposition. In keeping with the contemporary policy of the Australian government, the tour's emphasis on public gatherings helped to re-establish for citizens the transferable and long-lasting nature of British cultural frameworks despite the contradiction and tension of the immediate post-war period. In this objective, organisers were fortunate in that the Prince's attractiveness helped smooth cultural, religious and political differences among observers, whether attracted by the future monarch's personal qualities or simply the prospect of spectacle and pageantry. There can be no doubt that even if they opposed the celebration of monarchy on principle, many Australians nonetheless attended in pursuit of a good day out, especially if they received a day's payment.

Edward's personal attributes and failings, during wartime observed with condescension by Australians, were by the time of the tour received with almost uniform enthusiasm. His suitability as a leader for the post-war Empire was confirmed by his abilities as an inspiring public speaker, his supposedly progressive ideas and his admittedly limited military experiences, while underpinned by a humanist sense of sympathy and compassion towards those less privileged than himself. His democratic dislike of self-aggrandisement and even his boredom with formalities were positively perceived by Australians. This perceived 'ordinariness' was further enforced by a disinclination to hide some modest personal indulgences, such as a weakness for gambling, attractive women, and staying up late in the company of his friends. The

Prince was apparently masculine, daring, able to hold his own on horseback and able to establish equitable relationships with women from many walks of life.

In a more critical light, the tour can also be read as an example of how the magic of royalty, with good planning by the pro-imperial governing bodies and popular goodwill, could be used to temporarily reinforce pre-existing popular support for the monarchy, rather than an individual. Although Edward attracted many accolades, much of the tour's success can be attributed instead to the particular atmosphere of post-war elation in which it took place, as well as the opportunities it offered for state expansionist ambitions, for individuals to gather in community celebration and the ability of the most vehemently opposed to the principles of imperialism and capitalism to suspend their opposition for the duration of the festivities. Australians were able to easily disassociate the Prince from his position as a symbol of the Crown in favour of the more candid popular perceptions of his personality produced by human interest journalism. Largely, for many observers in the devastation and optimism of the years following the war, it seems that the Prince in 1920 embodied the most aspirational qualities for the ideal post-war Australian male. As the following three chapters will show, within sixteen short years, this would no longer be the case.

Chapter 4: The bachelor King

[He] would rather imperil his irreplaceable neck at a five-barred gate than imperil his happiness at the altar of Westminster.

-*The Mail*, 30 June 1923.¹

The shift in two contrasting Australian perceptions of Edward spaced sixteen years apart can be charted through his declining popularity in public and official estimation throughout the remainder of the 1920s and early 1930s. To do this, I explore how his perceived qualities – as a symbol of the Crown, an inspiration for peace, a modern exemplar and as a member of the family – were subject to greater public scrutiny following the tour and were briefly revived at the time of his accession to the throne in January 1936. I then analyse the output of the Australian press during the brief months that passed as he took up and then abandoned his Kingship, between late July 1936, when Wallis initiated divorce proceedings, and early December 1936, when details of the couple’s relationship broke in the world’s press. To what extent were Australians privy to details of the King’s wish to marry Wallis prior to the abdication?

The second half of this chapter turns to a closer examination of the development of the Australian government’s formal position in the months before the abdication. As noted in the Introduction, events, meetings and communications between British prime minister Stanley Baldwin, the King and their advisors during the prelude to the abdication has received considerable scholarly attention. Scholarly neglect of the Australian government’s perspective is especially striking given the crucial role of the Dominion prime ministers during the last week of November. In order to better understand the position of Australia’s Joseph Lyons, I examine the bureaucratic

¹ ‘PLAYFUL PRINCE OF WALES’, *The Mail* Adelaide, S.A., 30 June 1923, p. 15. The text is attributed to ‘An American writer.’

exchanges between the British and Australian governments before the Act was made public and supplement existing published accounts of the development of the British government's position with an interpretation of Australia's role in the preamble to the King's abdication. The Australian archival sources provide considerable new evidence for the background to Lyons' advice, and the earliest reactions of his colleagues, the press and the Australian public to the startling behaviour of the supposedly-confirmed bachelor King.

Declining public and official estimation

1920 marked the highpoint of Edward's popularity. Thereafter, popular and official Australian affection for his particular qualities – as a symbol of the Crown, an inspiration for peace, a modern exemplar and as a member of the family – began a terminal decline over the remainder of the 1920s and early 1930s. This demonstrates all too clearly the inherent incompatibility of the two versions of monarchy created by the constitutional distance and growing royal populism laid out by the Statute of Westminster. This is not to deny that, in an official sense, the monarch did not continue to preside at the apex of the Australian political system. Many of the concerns over geo-political influence and defence that dominated Australian political rhetoric and public imagination at the time of the royal tour only intensified as the 1920s wore on. Imperialism continued to thrive as a tool of inter-war political dominance under Hughes' and then, after 1923, Stanley Melbourne Bruce's Nationalist governments. As McKenna puts it, by the 1930s, Australian political life still 'remained in imperial chains' evidenced by, for example, the continued appointment of British Governors and

Governors-General, and the maintenance of ceremonial, educational, community and commercial affection beneath ‘the comforting cloak of the connection.’²

Despite this fertile cultural context, I have found that the more favourable democratic and progressive rhetoric that surrounded Edward as an individual receded, with the dominant emphasis shifting back to his association with the Crown. This finding reflects the dominant understanding of Edward’s kingship as an inevitable decline, as endorsed by most of the existing literature to date. In this case, it is important to note that this judgement was by no means true for all Australians, but there are certainly broad similarities. For many, Edward’s popularity reached its zenith with the departure of the H.M.S. *Renown* from Sydney harbour. For members of the Opposition, for example, a sparkling personality could no longer as easily compensate for the dominant political party’s insistence on imperial connections over domestic concerns. In 1921 Labor’s Norman Makin noted his respect for Australia’s cordial ‘association with and relation to Great Britain’ but, similarly to the previous year, still refused to be ‘allured by the so-called glories of Empire’ in pursuit of self-government and improving the living conditions of the Australian people.³ Equally, the issue of privilege continued to provoke socialist and working-class commentators. During the royal tour, some had put aside their intrinsic distaste for privilege by treating the Prince as an honoured visitor but not someone deserving of obsequious flattery. Ultimately Edward’s qualities had temporarily charmed some of the most virulently opposed to royalty when viewed at close range.

Afterwards, however, left-wing opposition reverted to its traditional stance. In 1926, the same year that the Balfour Declaration was enacted, the ALP’s Albert Green denounced the notion of ‘peasants bowing and scraping to Royalty.’ In his view, loyalty

² McKenna, *The captive republic*, p. 215.

³ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 21 April 1921, pp. 7611-12.

to an institution was one thing, but subservience to one man by mere accident of birth quite another. 'I am as loyal as any man', he said, but:

I do not think those are the sentiments that we should endeavour to foster among our Australian people. We can be loyal without idolizing any man ... I do not want these distorted ideas of what loyalty demands of us to be presented to my children.⁴

By the latter half of the 1920s a slight yet distinct antipathy to Edward's personal behaviour can also be discerned, marking a permanent end to many Australians' previously uncritical approval. Part of this change may be attributable to his advancing age. As a young man, he had been held up as a modern exemplar reflecting the optimism and glamour of the rebellious post-war generation, and an antidote to the anxieties faced by the inter-war Empire. He turned thirty in 1924, and so could no longer be considered in the first flush of bachelorhood. From this point on, Australian perceptions of his qualities changed, and attention sharpened toward his obligations to further both his own bloodline and, by doing so, perpetuate the power of the British monarchy within the Windsor dynasty.

During and immediately following the tour, Edward's familial qualities and supposed modern belief in marrying for love had been praised. In August 1920, the *Glenn Innes Examiner*, for example, had felt able to insist that the future King's first acts should be to lead by example and choose his own wife, thus sharing in the same 'human joys and privileges' as his people and enhancing the accessibility of those 'born in the purple.'⁵ However, this generosity proved short-lived and enthusiastic commentary on his marriage prospects resumed on Edward's return to England, with several women of royal and aristocratic lineage suggested for the highly-qualified role of consort. As Australians were able to read in *The World's News* of December 1920, it

⁴ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 25 June 1926, p. 3565. Green was referring to images seen in imported British cinematography.

⁵ 'ROYAL ALLIANCE', *Glen Innes Examiner*, N.S.W., 19 August 1920, p. 6.

was reportedly necessary that the morality of the future King's wife be beyond question, given her responsibility to exert a 'beneficial sway over vast numbers of her fellow-creatures.'⁶ **Image 23**

Of equal if not greater importance was the King's wife's reproductive capacity. Without an heir to a royal family of the magnitude and tenacity of Britain's, the future of the Empire was thrown into doubt. By 1922, the Gawler *Bunyip* described the unfolding of a 'tremendous furore' in England following the marriage of Edward's younger sister, Princess Mary, the implication being that Edward could not for much longer restrain his bachelor freedom before being 'led to the alter' in order to produce a family of his own to succeed him.⁷ These fears were justified the following year with the birth of Mary's son. Although George Lascelles was far removed from the throne by his mother's gender and position in the royal family, he was nonetheless the King and Queen's first grandchild. Edward was apparently averse to selecting a white British bride from the aristocracy, or even perusing the options remaining from within the fragmented European dynasties. Perhaps he would never marry at all – a major blow to the virility of the reigning House of Windsor.

It was in this light that the Adelaide *Mail* of June 1923 along with many other newspapers reproduced the daring remarks of an American writer in a New York paper, who reported that the Prince now contemplated his siblings and nephew with the view that 'we are none of us indispensable.'⁸ It had also been noted that Edward had begun a habit of delegating the less glamorous of his official duties to his 'staid and silent' brother Albert, the Duke of York. This, the author remarked, thrust the latter into a position of 'unexpected prominence.'⁹ Thirteen years before the abdication, this first

⁶ 'Who Will Be England's Future Queen?', *The World's News*, New South Wales, 11 December 1920, p. 8.

⁷ 'THE PRINCE'S BRIDE', *Bunyip*, Gawler, S.A., 10 March 1922, p. 2.

⁸ 'PLAYFUL PRINCE OF WALES', *The Mail Adelaide*, S.A., 30 June 1923, p. 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*

raised the possibility that the Prince was disinclined for the Kingship, and also that his younger brother occupied the fringes of his public life. **Image 24**

The major factor was that the Duke had the same year married the aristocratic Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. At his father's urging, Albert had reluctantly relinquished his relationship with Sheila Loughborough in 1920 in exchange for the Dukedom. The King had similarly demanded that Edward give up Freda but was met with defiance.¹⁰ As the Duchess was now the fourth most-prominent female member of the royal family, news of the alliance received some modest interest in Australia. For example, her perceived personality met with the approval of the *Queensland Times*, who praised her 'joie de vivre and love of home.'¹¹ When the couple's daughter Elizabeth was born in 1926, the child became by virtue of her uncle's childlessness the third in line to the throne, thus ensuring the indirect continuance of the Windsor dynasty in Britain but also propelling the Yorks into the public eye as never before.

Edward's controversial private life, that is, his continued passion for Freda, could no longer be ignored within royal and diplomatic circles. A lively Australian perception of the whispers circulating in Whitehall is laid out in the private correspondence of Richard Casey, the Australian prime minister Stanley Bruce's political liaison officer, who was based in London between 1924 and 1929. It was undoubtedly from information offered by the trusted Casey that Bruce developed his critical attitude towards the Prince's behaviour. As this chapter will go on to explain, Bruce, by 1936 the Australian High Commissioner, would be influential in the development of the Australian government's position during the abdication episode. By this time, as David Lee has described, Bruce had developed a 'vehement opposition to

¹⁰ Wainwright, *Sheila*, pp. 92-97.

¹¹ 'The Duchess of York', *Queensland Times* Ipswich, Qld., 21 June 1923, p. 8.

the prospect of a British sovereign marrying a twice divorced woman.¹² Casey's first mention of the troubles came more than a decade earlier, in October 1925, when he quoted Queen Mary as wishing that Edward would 'settle down' to marriage and 'take life a little more seriously.'¹³ Efforts by the royal family and the British government to entice Edward to the altar continued over the following years. Baldwin, for example, travelled to Canada with him in 1927. His role was 'exert his influence' in the Prince's consideration of Princess Ingrid of Sweden as a prospective wife, a strenuous effort but all to no avail.¹⁴

Also of concern to Australia was the Prince's rising uninterest in his official duties. In 1926, he had been invited by Bruce to visit Australia once again to open Provisional Parliament House in Canberra, but according to Arthur Bousfield and Garry Toffoli, Edward had lost interest in public engagements and 'was not enthusiastic about the idea.'¹⁵ And so it was confirmed that the newly-prominent Duke and Duchess of York would visit Australia between 26 March and 23 May 1927. The response was decidedly lukewarm. In September 1926, the *North-Eastern Advertiser* offered that the Duke:

gives one the impression of being a very serious young man. He is an exceedingly hard worker, but it would be quite foolish to suggest that he is noted for any particular cordiality. The Prince of Wales seems to have the 'lion's share' of that attribute in the Royal Family.¹⁶

The Duchess was quite another matter. The London journalist behind 'Woman's Realm' in the *Queenslander* could only offer that the Duke was a 'nice boy', but

¹² David Lee, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian internationalist* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 119.

¹³ Richard G. Casey, *My dear P.M.: R.G. Casey's letters to S.M. Bruce, 1924-1929*, eds. W. J. Hudson and J. North (Canberra. A.C.T.: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980), p. 95. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 22 October 1925.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 21 December 1927.

¹⁵ Arthur Bousfield and Garry Toffoli, *The Queen Mother and her century: an illustrated biography of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on her 100th birthday* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2000), p. 51.

¹⁶ 'AUSTRALIA HOUSE EN FETE', *North-Eastern Advertiser*, Scottsdale, Tas., 3 September 1926, p. 3.

remarked how beloved Elizabeth was in Britain.¹⁷ Also in London, Casey heard that the Duke was ‘pleased’ to be going to Australia, tired as he was of acting as ‘third string.’¹⁸ Albert hoped to one day hold the post of Governor-General within one of the Dominions and was working towards gaining the experience necessary for public life. His ‘great disability’ was his stutter, particularly troublesome over words starting with a hard ‘c’. ““Canberra” will be a big hurdle for him!’ Casey remarked.¹⁹

In due course, Albert and Elizabeth attended the opening of Provisional Parliament House and visited all the states and territories with the exception of the Northern Territory. When compared with the popular success of his brother’s exhausting tour of 1920, this visit was markedly more restrained. Perhaps anticipating a similar reaction, Albert took steps to constrain the itinerary to manageable proportions.²⁰ His concern was for his wife, whose doctors were anxious that she avoid ‘extreme climatic conditions’ damaging to ‘her condition for her next confinement’, considering that the ‘birth of a male heir is considered vitally important.’²¹ Despite attempts to maintain a lower profile, as in 1920 some sections of the community criticised the allocation of public funds to the royal visit during a time of recession and unemployment. In Hobart, ‘ANZAC’, for example, condemned the spending of public funds on entertaining the royal couple ‘when in their very midst are returned soldiers starving.’²²

It was clear from the outset that the Duke lacked his brother’s attractiveness and talent for public engagement. Cyril White had again taken up the reins of organisation, but was apparently ‘so ill-informed’ that he believed that Albert could not speak in

¹⁷ ‘WOMAN’S REALM’, *The Queenslander* Brisbane, Qld., 29 May 1926, p. 5.

¹⁸ Casey, *My dear P.M.*, p. 206. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 3 June 1926.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ NAA, A1606, B40/1 ATTACHMENT. Telegram to Amery from J.L.B. Stonehaven, 28 July 1926.

²¹ NAA, A1606, B40/1 ATTACHMENT. Telegram to unknown recipient, likely Bruce or Stonehaven, from Casey, 28 July 1926.

²² ‘LETTERS TO THE EDITOR’, *The Mercury*, Hobart, Tas., 11 April 1927, p. 4.

public at all, and so many opportunities to engage with the crowds were lost.²³ Although his persona was buoyed by the presence of the stylish and amiable Duchess and the trials of a royal tour were undoubtedly eased when shared between two, their coupledness also ruled out any opportunities to create a sensation by dancing with shop girls. *Truth* predicted that Elizabeth would be forbidden to dance or partake in ‘strenuous forms of recreation’ at all, although the journalist could only have guessed at the reason why.²⁴

This decorous behaviour deprived the public of one of the most popular means of supposedly democratic visual access to royalty. The Duchess, ably demonstrating companionable support of her husband’s social inadequacies, did nonetheless charm those who met her. ‘Of the two, the wife’s personality made the greatest impression on me’, later admitted one woman.²⁵ The Duke did not have many opportunities to meet anyone. According to William Maloney, Albert had been ‘fenced off from the people almost like an Eastern potentate.’ The royal progress also left much to be desired. In Sydney, he was ‘hurried so quickly through the streets in a motor car that the route over which he passed has been known ever since as “The Speedway”.’²⁶ **Image 25**

The onset of the economic downturn also undermined crowd numbers. Although 5,000 invited dignitaries and some 100,000 members of the general public were expected to attend the opening of Parliament House, figures fell far short. Unfortunately, ‘the smallness of the crowd and the fact that the bulk of the crowd apparently brought their own meal’ left the government with a large debt to the catering company and several tons of uneaten meat pies.²⁷ The celebrations were also blighted by an accident before the ceremonials took place. Royal Australian Air Force aviator

²³ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 13 June 1928, p. 6046.

²⁴ ‘Cats’ Whispers’, *Truth*, Sydney, N.S.W., 10 January 1926, p. 17.

²⁵ ‘A WOMAN’S POINT OF VIEW’, *The Land*, Sydney, N.S.W., 18 December 1936, p. 16.

²⁶ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 13 June 1928, p. 6046.

²⁷ NAA, A1, 1927/4412. Memorandum for Secretary, Royal Visit Cabinet Committee, from J.H Butters, 30 May 1927.

Francis Ewen lost control of his aircraft and crashed on the outskirts of the crowd near the refreshment tent. The horrified spectators who rushed to help could do nothing for the gravely injured young man and he died that evening.²⁸ By any estimation, the 1927 tour did not replicate the fervent popular engagement, widespread attendance or extensive press promotion inspired by the particular appeal of the Prince of Wales. While this must also be attributed to the never-to-be-repeated set of social conditions in place in Australia of 1920, and also Edward's heightened appeal as the future King rather than a younger brother, it does highlight how visual accessibility and a winning personality were vital ingredients in a successful Australian royal tour.²⁹

However, the tour did help to secure the Duke, in the eyes of his advisors at least, as a suitably experienced candidate for a Dominion Governor-Generalship.³⁰ According to Casey, Harry Batterbee, the Under Secretary at the Dominions Office, felt that Albert could perform satisfactorily as a Governor-General when supported by the Duchess and a knowledgeable staff.³¹ Critically, however, there were other objectives already at work. In November 1927, for example, Australian newspapers noted the curious fact that the Duke's household now issued its own Court Circular, a privilege only ever previously enjoyed by the heir to the throne. Mystified, the editor of the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* decided this must be due to the Duke's growing responsibility as the 'business man' of the family.³²

Casey's private observations further reveal how royal and diplomatic plans for the Duke following the Australian tour had displaced him from his role as second

²⁸ 'Parliament House Opened', *The Capricornian*, Rockhampton, Qld., 12 May 1927, p. 27.

²⁹ Seven years later, another of Edward's younger brothers, Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, who would later serve a short term as Governor-General, also visited Australia for a restrained tour between October and December 1934. As it was organised to coincide with the centenary of Victoria, much of the visit took place in that state with shorter journeys undertaken to other states and territories, again with the exception of the Northern Territory.

³⁰ Casey, *My dear P.M.*, p. 289. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 16 February 1928.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 5 January 1928.

³² 'THE DUKE OF YORK', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 7 November 1927, p. 5.

brother to occupy a more prominent position in promoting the royal family as guardians of the Crown. In February 1928, he recorded how Patrick Hodgeson, the Duke's Private Secretary, felt some reluctance towards the idea of the couple leaving Britain for the Dominions, as this would mean there was no 'appropriate Royal Lady' to whom the now elderly Queen Mary's social and philanthropic obligations could be delegated. The Duchess had begun taking on a greater number of these duties, increasing her public profile immeasurably at the same time. Predictably, Hodgeson also noted the desirability of 'further additions' to the Duke's family 'in the absence of any other male heir.'³³ The King also maintained that the 'creation of a family' (Princess Elizabeth notwithstanding) was the Duke's priority.³⁴ By 1928, significant measures were being taken to expand the sphere of Albert's public life in Britain, as at that time he represented the best hope of maintaining the prestige of the Windsor dynasty.

Rehabilitative measures were nonetheless afflicted on the unresponsive Prince of Wales. The marriage negotiations took a forceful turn. In January 1928, Casey wrote of the 'pressure' directed towards Edward 'with regard to his marriage.' He hinted at 'some little anxiety' within the Establishment, as to 'the amount of heart that [Edward] would find himself able to put into it – as it would, of course, be a *mariage de convenance* [sic]', meaning whether or not Edward could be persuaded to abandon adulterous relationships. Giving the increased interest in the private lives of the royal family, the press could no longer be relied upon to turn a blind eye as during previous reigns. Casey concluded that any 'subsequent scandal would be almost as bad as if he had never married.'³⁵ By this time, he perceived that matters had reached a watershed, Baldwin having only recently 'woken up to the fact that the royal family is the only positive imperial link that is left', and realised his own responsibilities to 'keep them up

³³ Casey, *My dear P.M.*, p. 290. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 16 February 1928.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 411. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 27 September 1928.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 250-51. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 19 January 1928.

to their job, and to make opportunities for them to make more of themselves in the public estimation', as he put it.³⁶

Any threat to the continuity of the British royal family was also a threat to Australia's imperial trade and economic ties with Britain. In light of Baldwin's lack of success to date, Casey urged Bruce as representative of 'one of the major Dominions' to confront the Prince himself at a planned Imperial Conference in the hope of conveying to him that the 'certainty of the succession in a straight line is no less than essential for the maintenance of the Empire.'³⁷ A few months later, however, he happily reported further 'earnest conversations' between the Prince, King and prime minister about the former's 'obligations to the nation.'³⁸ The Prince, then still in love with Freda, was bullied into agreeing in principle to 'consider a union' with Princess Ingrid, but yet again nothing eventuated.³⁹

It was inevitable that these tensions would work their way into the Dominion press, particularly those with links to American newspaper agencies. By the later 1920s, irreverent Australian newspaper editors were willing to reproduce still more American opinion pieces concerning the Prince's poor behaviour. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the style of reporting sought to reveal aspects of the royals' private lives in a radical departure from the previous restraint exercised by the British and Australian agencies. The Duke of York, one journalist pointed out in *The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* in January 1928, was emerging as a figure of some importance, even one as popular as the Prince. This was because 'in dynastic matters, it is necessary to think a few generations ahead' and the Duke's issue had already ensured the continuation of the Crown. His brother's prominence was 'probably not at all

³⁶ Ibid., p. 240. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 5 January 1928.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 290. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 16 February 1928.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 344. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 2 May 1928.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 348. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 10 May 1928.

displeasing' to Edward, the paper alleged, going so far as to almost seditiously describe the latter's attitude to his job as weary, slightly disgusted, perfunctory and disillusioned.⁴⁰

By now, the seeds of doubt had been publicly sown in the press over the Prince's commitment to his future role and the continuation of the Crown and British Empire in all its power. The potential damage of Australian goodwill towards Edward was so much in evidence to Godfrey Thomas, his loyal Private Secretary, that he authorised the release of a serial reiterating the Prince's deeds and achievements that was reproduced across the country towards the end of the year. Thomas strenuously defended the Prince against accusations of vapidness, nervousness and superficiality. Although the brothers were facially similar, Thomas claimed, there the likeness ended. The Duke was 'at once more studious and possibly less gregarious' and had been denied the exposure to the 'galaxy of human types' that equipped the Prince so well for democratic public life.⁴¹ Even though Australians did not seem to be quick to pass judgement on the Prince, readers of this piece must have surely felt Thomas' anxiety emanating from the pages.

Despite such measures, the situation would only worsen. By 1929, Casey relayed to Bruce that the Prince took little interest in matters administered by the Foreign Office and the Dominions Office.⁴² He observed that Edward's relationship with his father had deteriorated, so much so that he had shown no 'pronounced filial feeling' during the King's illness, nor had he consistently attended meetings at which he was supposed to be representing him.⁴³ The contrast between the Prince's previous geniality and accessibility and growing reluctance to participate in his official duties

⁴⁰ 'THE PRINCE OF WALES', *The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, N.S.W., 27 January 1928, p. 3.

⁴¹ 'THE LIFE STORY OF H.R.H.', *Examiner*, Launceston, Tas., 19 October 1928, p. 13.

⁴² Casey, *My dear P.M.*, p. 480. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 21 March 1929.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 476. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 14 March 1929.

was starkly rendered. Having fallen off a racehorse at Ascot in 1924, he appeared to be willing to continue to ‘risk his life’ with equine-related activities, and selfishly, some thought, care little for the prospect of rendering himself unable to fulfil his official role.⁴⁴

The wisdom of his high degree of public engagement, as evidenced during 1920, began to appear misguided. It is possible that public expectations exceeded the Prince’s finite capabilities, burdened as he was by his private problems and limitations. Years before, the daring American journalist reprinted in the *Adelaide Mail* had argued Edward may have had too much of a good thing, and unwittingly laid bare his own failings. He had travelled ‘perhaps too much’, meaning his ‘restless instinct has been overdeveloped’ despite having ‘no new worlds to conquer ... he has passed beyond the illusions.’ Nodding to Bagehot’s warning over revealing too much of the magic, the author felt that the Prince:

cannot have it both ways. Either he is a sacred person or he is merely secular, and there is, perhaps, too startling a contrast between, let us say, a photograph of royal surf bathing at Honolulu and that modest pageant known as a coronation in Westminster Abbey.⁴⁵

This reflects unequivocally the view held by King George V. In his later years, Edward recalled some advice offered and unheeded. His father had noted that the Prince had enjoyed much greater freedom during his youth and been in a position to ‘mix with all manner of people’ in ways a monarch had never previously experienced. ‘But don’t think that this means you can now act like other people. You must always heed your position and who you are’ he told the young Prince.⁴⁶ Edward had also been warned by Frederick Ponsonby, an elderly courtier, of the dangers of appearing ‘too accessible’ and that bringing the monarchy ‘down’ would destroy much of the mystery and

⁴⁴ ‘PRINCE OF WALES’, *Observer*, Adelaide, S.A., 22 March 1924, p. 42.

⁴⁵ ‘PLAYFUL PRINCE OF WALES’, *The Mail* Adelaide, S.A., 30 June 1923, p. 15. The Prince had been photographed shirtless in the surf in Hawaii during the journey to Australia in 1920.

⁴⁶ Windsor, *A king’s story*, p. 132.

influence.⁴⁷ Casey too subscribed to the inadvisability of royalty appearing too much in the public eye. He was underwhelmed by the ‘atmosphere of unreality and fancy dress’ at a reception at Buckingham Palace and felt for a person to be ‘completely and overwhelmingly loyal, the subject should never see his sovereign.’⁴⁸ As Beadle has observed of the Canadian context, perhaps by 1928 the Prince had experienced too much adulation, and fatally equated his personal popularity with the reverence accorded to his role.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, despite their disavowal of imperialism as a tool of dominance by the governing powers, some Australian Labor politicians still perceived Edward’s proactive qualities as eminently suitable for his role as future imperial leader. As in 1920, some still chose to emphasise his attributes, at least where these aligned with traditional labour prerogatives, and perpetuated the belief that the Prince was a man possessing liberal leanings distinct from the role he was born to perform. In Britain, his tendency to voice his sympathy with the poor had threatened his political neutrality, where his comments indicated criticism of the government’s position on employment. In response, advisors attempted to divert the Prince’s attention to neutral causes such as farm schools and British trade.⁵⁰ Bruce’s Nationalist government also hoped to bolster imperial connections provided the monarch kept well away from politics. When in 1929, for example, the ALP’s Frank Anstey attempted to move a resolution in Parliament expressing ‘gratitude for the courage’ and ‘broad humanitarianism’ of the Prince, Bruce refused to ‘allow one word to be said’ in support of Edward’s convictions.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 136.

⁴⁸ Casey, *My dear P.M.*, p. 348. Letter to Bruce from Casey, 10 May 1928.

⁴⁹ Beadle, ‘Canada and the Abdication of Edward VIII’, p. 35.

⁵⁰ ‘OUR LONDON LETTER’, *The Mercury*, Hobart, Tas., 18 June 1931, p. 5.

⁵¹ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 7 February 1929, p. 54.

A brief revival of popular affection

Despite all efforts to the contrary, 41-year-old Edward was the only one of his siblings to remain unmarried at the time of his father's death in January 1936. His reign began with lengthy court mourning procedures. J. Vance Marshall, an Australian who observed the funeral procession in London, perceived that the solitary new King's face had 'aged a thousand years ... he was not adopting a majestic pose ... [and] seemed ill at ease' as he walked behind the coffin.⁵² There can be no doubt that Edward entertained many preoccupations. He had ended his relationship with Freda in 1931, but not due to the urging of his advisors. He had fallen deeply in love with Wallis, then married to Ernest Simpson. As his father's health failed and it began to appear that his reign would not last long, he made up his mind to marry her, seeking to find 'what for so long had been lacking', the companion without whom his 'service to the state would seem an empty thing.'⁵³ As the Archbishop of Canterbury would be unable to perform the required rites in Westminster Abbey when one party was divorced, this decision effectively meant relinquishing his position as King, or at least, all that the position had symbolised until then. **Image 26**

Unfortunately for Edward, the Archbishop at this time also had plans for what his biographer describes as an 'Evangelistic campaign' to coincide with the planned 1937 coronation. This 'recall to religion' emphasised morality and patriotism at a time of supposed laxity in morals.⁵⁴ Sexuality and the sacrament of marriage were central concerns to the Church. As George Machin has shown, amid growing secularism in the wake of the First World War, by the 1930s the clergy's power over traditional morality

⁵² 'THE KING IS DEAD', *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, N.S.W., 13 March 1936, p. 7.

⁵³ Windsor, *A king's story*, p. 258.

⁵⁴ Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang*, p. 398.

appeared waning.⁵⁵ Lang was concerned over a ‘loosening of the ties of marriage and in a lack of restraint upon the impulses of sex.’⁵⁶ Amid growing societal pressure to reform Britain’s divorce laws from the end of the nineteenth century, Lang saw the post-war British monarchy as powerful allies in his campaign for a morally cohesive society.⁵⁷ In short, Edward’s future with Wallis was not auspicious.

Though knowledge of the King’s affairs of the heart still remained mostly confined with the closed ranks of Establishment circles, other Australians besides Bruce and Casey were by now aware of the friction between Edward and his advisors. During the later 1920s, the former would almost certainly have imparted their concerns to colleague Joseph Lyons, then leader of the United Australia Party, who would become prime minister in 1932. The situation reached something of an impasse when Edward ascended the throne. In contrast to the modest disparagement published in the Australian press when he was Prince, now as King he could not be openly criticised as *lèse-majesté* was a punishable offence. Nonetheless, Lyons and his wife Enid heard further suggestions that Edward was involved with a married woman when attending the Silver Jubilee of King George V in London in May 1935.⁵⁸ Other attending Ministers including Robert Menzies and Earle Page were also reportedly party to the rumours.⁵⁹ Enid Lyons stated that her husband was ‘singularly uninterested in scandalous gossip’ and did not at that time suspect any forthcoming trouble.⁶⁰ **Image 27**

As this and subsequent chapters will collectively demonstrate, Lyons’ personality, in many ways at odds with the puritan Bruce, would come to bear on his accepting attitude towards the King’s behaviour and ultimately the Australian

⁵⁵ George Machin, ‘Marriage and the Churches in the 1930s: Royal Abdication and Divorce Reform, 1936-7’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42/1 (1991), pp. 68-81, p. 68.

⁵⁶ Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang*, p. 410.

⁵⁷ David Starkey, *Crown and country: a history of England through the monarchy* (London: Harper Press, 2010), p. 482.

⁵⁸ Enid Lyons, *So we take comfort* (London: Heinemann, 1965), p. 248.

⁵⁹ ‘IN OTHER CITIES’, *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, S.A., 5 December 1936, p. 27.

⁶⁰ Lyons, *So we take comfort*, p. 248.

government's position on the abdication. Enid Lyons claims for her husband an admiration for the monarch's position at the apex of government and as the neutral symbol of the Crown. By 1928, she writes that his early republican leanings had for the most part:

given way to a convinced support of monarchy. He regarded the American system that required the Head of the State to struggle in the miry arena of party politics as lessening the dignity of the State itself, and tending to lessen the respect in which its laws were held. A symbol of State set apart above the common things of everyday had become his ideal.⁶¹

David Bird has offered a considered sense of Lyons' liberal Catholicism and sense of tolerance and sympathy that further informs what we know of his early uninterest in the Whitehall gossip. Lyons' political style was 'extremely sentimental, subjective and "personal" to an extent that would be considered extraordinary today', he writes, also noting that the prime minister's upbringing 'gave him a gentleness that was never to leave him.'⁶² Enid Lyons agrees that tolerance was 'a part of him.'⁶³ Her husband also placed great value on the 'life of the home', children and a happy marriage.⁶⁴ This liberal outlook extended to the private lives of other individuals, even when this broached on government territory. Of the celebrated case of Mabel Freer of October 1936, Lyons maintained that the government had 'no right to interfere in the morals of other people; it's nothing to do with us.'⁶⁵ Knowing this of his character, his

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 145.

⁶² David Bird, 'J.A. Lyons, the 'Tame Tasmanian'; A Study in Australian Foreign and Defence Policy, 1932-39.', PhD thesis (The University of Melbourne, 2004, 2004), p. 41, 52.

⁶³ Lyons, *So we take comfort*, p. 145.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 142.

⁶⁵ 'Irvine Douglas interviewed by Mel Pratt', 1972. Item 766383, Mel Pratt oral history recording collection, NLA. Freer was a divorced British passport-holder excluded from disembarking at Fremantle. Although the reason given was Freer's failure to pass a dictation test in Italian, her articulate campaign waged in the press to be allowed to land revealed most clearly the moral concerns of the Australian government. She intended to marry her travelling companion, an Australian officer seconded to the Indian Army, who was also seeking a divorce from his wife. For further discussion, see Iain Stewart, Jessie Hohmann, and Kel Robertson, 'Dictating to One of "Us": The Migration of Mrs Freer', *Macquarie Law Journal*, 5 (2005), pp. 241-75.

decision in 1935 to turn a blind eye, initially, to criticism of the King's behaviour seems customary.

In any case, no suggestion of Wallis clouded the Australian coverage of King George V's funeral, Edward's proclamation ceremonies or the formal British accession reception of March 1936. Australian perceptions of the new King regained some of their previous exaltation, although as Nairn has cautioned, this cannot be too unsurprisingly as all incoming monarchs are identified as fresh and positive influences.⁶⁶ Edward's reign was largely positively received, perhaps in part owing to *lèse-majesté*, but also demonstrating an Australian willingness to forgo previous criticisms in favour of the new democratic King's usefulness to the Empire. Tension in Europe, notably the rise of dictators Hitler and Mussolini, and their antagonism of the League of Nations, also foretold the need for an inspiring figurehead to unite the disparate Dominions under the Crown. Labor Senator Joe Collings hoped Edward would 'steer, not only the Empire, but also the other nations involved, through the darkness which at present seems almost impenetrable.'⁶⁷

Similarly, in the House of Representatives, Lyons hoped that the new King's reign would be 'marked by the prosperity and progress of the countries comprising the British Empire', revealing of his view of Australian defence as one with that of the Empire.⁶⁸ Opposition leader John Curtin hoped for 'great changes for the betterment of humanity.'⁶⁹ The new King was also perceived by some Australians as a practical peacemaker. Later in the year, a small Tasmanian group compiled a petition of some 1500 signatures in support of the dissolution of the League. The petitioners felt assured

⁶⁶ Nairn, *The Enchanted glass*, p. 107.

⁶⁷ Parliament of Australia, Senate, 'Debates', 10 March 1936, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 10 March 1936, p. 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

that Edward demonstrated the ‘ability and influence and power to accomplish much for the well-ruling and governing of the world and the stability of its society.’⁷⁰

Favourable perceptions of the King’s personality and democratic inclinations were also revived. Particularly popular in Parliament was the incumbent’s declaration to work ‘for the happiness and welfare of all classes of my subjects.’⁷¹ Senator George Pearce insisted that Edward’s interest in the life of the people was ‘real.’⁷² The new King was ‘a product of modernity, with a breezy, unconventional outlook’, who attracted ‘profound admiration and respect from the peoples of the world’ one journalist enthused.⁷³ Similarly, the *Australian Women’s Weekly* perceived a ‘modern King who will put his stamp on history.’⁷⁴ The *Queenslander* put a positive emphasis on Edward being a man set on ‘marrying for love.’⁷⁵ Each of the new King’s attributes most favourably regarded by Australians in 1920 - as a symbol of the Crown, as an inspiration for peace, as a modern exemplar and as a member of the family – were briefly revived during his accession celebrations.

Impending trouble

All the favourable publicity in the world could not dispel the encroaching tension in the King’s court. Before I turn my attention to growing Australian awareness of his relationship with Wallis between July and September 1936, it is necessary to lay out some context from the developments in Britain’s press. As mentioned in the Introduction, some years after meeting Edward, Wallis filed for divorce from her husband in July 1936. In her petition, she alleged that Ernest had admitted to adultery

⁷⁰ NAA, A7640, 3.

⁷¹ Quoted in Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII*, p. 26.

⁷² Parliament of Australia, Senate, ‘Debates’, 10 March 1936, p. 4.

⁷³ ‘KING EDWARD VIII’, *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, N.S.W., 25 January 1936, p. 2.

⁷⁴ ‘We enter the era of Edward VIII’, *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, 1 February 1936, p. 5.

⁷⁵ ‘Marrying the King’, *The Queenslander*, Brisbane, Qld., 26 March 1936, p. 15.

with an ‘Elizabeth Kennedy’, circumstances confirmed by three employees of the Hotel de Paris in Bray, Berkshire.⁷⁶

Stephen Cretney has examined the legislative context of this bizarre situation. During the 1930s, evidence that a couple had, for whatever reason, privately agreed between themselves to divorce, rather than at the behest of the ‘injured’ party, was considered unlawful.⁷⁷ Evidence had to be provided of the physical unfaithfulness of one against the other, and so the tale of the respondent being discovered enjoying a post-coital cigarette in bed with someone other than their spouse by a surprised hotel chambermaid became an oft-recounted one.⁷⁸ Although the Simpsons swore no collusion had taken place, were evidence presented that Wallis had herself previously committed adultery with the King, or that money had changed hands in support of a separation, she would not have been entitled to petition for divorce.

Not since the early eighteenth century scandal of Queen Caroline and King George IV had the public life of a monarch been quite so publicly and unsavourily associated with divorce.⁷⁹ Should aspersions be cast by any private person, the King’s Proctor, Sir Thomas Barnes, a public servant responsible for investigating petitions for collusion, would be required to investigate. As Cretney points out, the possibility of the necessary investigations revealing damaging information against the King was of huge

⁷⁶ TNA, J 162/1. Affidavit in support of Application to amend Petition, Simpson (W) v. Simpson (EA), 30 July 1936. It was true that Ernest had been having an affair of his own; the woman seen at the Hotel de Paris was Mary Raffray, who had become his lover in around 1935 and later his wife.

⁷⁷ Stephen Cretney, ‘Edward, Mrs Simpson and the Divorce Law’, *History Today*, 53/9 (2003), pp. 26-28, p. 26.

⁷⁸ TNA, TS 22/1/2. Document citing correspondence from M. E. Thomas, April 1937. A willing co-respondent could be hired for this purpose for around £300.

⁷⁹ For further discussion, see Paul Pickering, ‘A Grand Ossification: William Cobbett and the Commemoration of Tom Paine’, in Paul Pickering and Alex Tyrell (eds.), *Contested Sites: Commemoration, Memorial and Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain* (UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004), pp. 57-80, p. 68.

concern to Baldwin and the British government.⁸⁰ The other obvious conclusion could only be that it was the King who was the adulterer, rather than Ernest Simpson, who had ‘admitted’ as such. Such a scandal would have a profound effect on public affection for the monarchy, and by extension the foundations of government. Any hope of the British and Dominion public continuing to perceive the King as an idealised, progressive family man would surely be lost. The hearing was scheduled for October 1936, meaning if Wallis’ petition was successful, her divorce would be finalised six months later. Edward was able to persuade the British newspaper doyens to restrict reporting to the facts only, which, as Schwartzbach argues, adhered to an established precedent for the British press to respectfully ignore the activities of a monarch’s mistress.⁸¹

The King, however, did not match their discretion with his own. He began to behave increasingly recklessly, most notably during the notorious *Nahlin* jaunt between August and September. As Linkoff has pointed out, the cruise marked a point when the King appeared content to be photographed in the company of Wallis, and possibly even actively encouraged this public confirmation of their togetherness.⁸² The American press avidly followed Wallis’ every move, although Britain’s press remained obediently and resolutely silent in contrast.⁸³ Beadle describes American journalists as seizing upon these activities ‘in the sensational manner of a Hollywood romance’ and outlines how the close geographical proximity of this ‘yellow journalism’ placed the Canadian press in a position of some awkwardness. Between July and December most Canadian

⁸⁰ Cretney, ‘Edward, Mrs Simpson and the Divorce Law’, p. 26. As would be the case, a ‘citizen’s intervention’ in the proceedings was also possible from members of the public incensed by perceptions of moral laxity within the upper-classes and judicial conspiracy who could also offer evidence against the couple.

⁸¹ Schwartzbach, ‘Love, Marriage and Divorce’, p. 142.

⁸² A later news report claimed that the King actively encouraged attendant photographers to take photographs during the cruise. ‘MRS. SIMPSON: A PERSONAL SKETCH’, *Cairns Post*, Cairns, Qld., 8 December 1936, p. 8; Linkoff, ‘The photographic attack on his royal highness’, p. 283.

⁸³ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 286. For further discussion, see Siebert, ‘The Press and the British Constitutional Crisis.’

editors voluntarily boycotted any mention of the relationship, probably following the attitudes of their own staff based in London. This curtailed the formation of any widespread or meaningful Canadian public opinion (with the exception of those who had access to American publications) and ultimately left the Canadian public as ‘totally unprepared’ as their British counterparts when the ‘bombshell’ was revealed.⁸⁴

The situation in Australia, or indeed New Zealand and South Africa, has not to date been similarly scrutinised. Most accounts have assumed that Australian journalism deferred to Britain’s lead. Even at the time, the contemporary American press believed that Australian journalism observed the ‘greatest restraint and people [in the] great cities ... know practically nothing.’⁸⁵ In 1966, Fairbanks claimed that the Australian press was both cognisant of the agreement, and took steps to enforce it in consultation with the other Dominions. ‘The newspaper owners of Great Britain, Australia and the other Commonwealth countries decided to suppress any and all references [to the couple]’ he wrote, suggesting an ambitious and far-reaching ploy aiming to keep all British subjects ‘in the dark.’⁸⁶ A year earlier, Edwards had made the general claim that no reports appeared in the Dominion press concerning the King ‘being so frequently in Mrs Simpson’s company.’⁸⁷ While this may be more or less true in the case of Canada, the case of Australia was far more nuanced.

The Australian response to the King’s activities is revealing of local attitudes towards the importation of inter-war American cultural influences. David Mosler and Robert Catley argue that Australia was at this time ‘one of the most willing absorbers of

⁸⁴ Beadle, ‘Canada and the Abdication of Edward VIII’, p. 36. Williams’ later assessment of the status of Canadian opinion differs. Drawing on correspondence held by the RA, she reveals instead widespread popular support for the King outside of press circles. Williams, *The People’s King*, pp. 203-04.

⁸⁵ TNA, HO 144/21070/1. Copy of North American Newspaper Alliance media release, 18 October 1936.

⁸⁶ Fairbanks, ‘Australia and the abdication crisis, 1936’, p. 296.

⁸⁷ Edwards, *Bruce of Melbourne*, p. 250.

Yankee cultural forms.’⁸⁸ American media culture, advertising and the material aspirations of the ‘American Dream’ displaced nascent Australian cultural tropes and posed a growing threat to Anglo-Australian, that is, Empire dominance.⁸⁹ In 1935, a body titled the Cultural Defence Committee was formed in Sydney to combat the ‘menace’ of supposedly cheap and low-brow content found in syndicated American newspapers and magazines, the slang and ‘nasal intonation’ common to American radio broadcasts and, from 1929, the ‘talkies’, all of which were enthusiastically adopted by young people.⁹⁰ The adoption of American notions of consumerism and capitalism clashed with many Australians’ sense of dedication to British monarchical symbolism, a unionised workforce and a growing sense of nationalistic self-interest.⁹¹ Growing Americanisation of the 1920s and 1930s, argues Kate Darian-Smith, was easily equated with ‘trash and corruption’ in contrast to the supposed quality of British culture and institutions.⁹²

It follows, therefore, that the Australian press’ response to the global circulation of reports of the King’s relationship with an American woman might reveal two possible attitudes. In the early stages, a large proportion of editors made no mention of the relationship at all. The *Argus* of 31 July, for example, mentioned only the *Nahlin*’s specifications rather than anyone on board.⁹³ It is possible that this initial dearth of editorial commentary in both metropolitan and regional publications illustrates a genuine unfamiliarity with Wallis, although it is more likely that it reflects the reticence of the British press and their international agencies, which in turn coloured early

⁸⁸ David Mosler and Robert Catley, *America and Americans in Australia* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), p. 24.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ ‘IMPORTED LITERARY GARBAGE’, *Queensland Figaro*, Brisbane, Qld., 22 June 1935, p. 3.

⁹¹ Mosler and Catley, *America and Americans in Australia*, p. 23.

⁹² Kate Darian-Smith, *On the home front: Melbourne in wartime: 1939-1945* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2009), p. 212.

⁹³ ‘HOLIDAY CRUISE FOR KING’, *The Argus* Melbourne, Vic., 31 July 1936, p. 8.

Australian perceptions on the matter. During the inter-war period, most of the press information available had originated from Britain. From the end of the nineteenth century, the British press behemoth Reuters and, to a lesser degree, the United States agency Associated Press, had exerted a monopoly over the content supplied to Australian agencies and newspapers.⁹⁴ Australian journalists also rewrote information drawn from carbon copies of the British and American dailies.⁹⁵ In 1935, the expense of obtaining news from overseas agencies prompted the amalgamation of the two Australian agencies existing at the time, the Australian Press Association and United Cable Service. With former royal tour journalist Keith Murdoch at the helm, the resulting Australian Associated Press had its own bureaux in London and New York. Prue Torney-Parlicki has estimated that in 1936-37, some 85 per cent of overseas news published in Australia came from London, with approximately 12 per cent from New York and the remaining three per cent from elsewhere.⁹⁶

Despite the lack of published commentary, there can be no doubt that information on the situation flowed along these well-established agency networks without ending up in print. The early reticence cannot therefore be identified as official censorship, despite the later allegation by Labor politician Sol Rosevear that early rumours were ‘excised’ from certain publications by ‘censorship officers in Australia and in other parts of the British Empire’ in a manner similar to that of Britain.⁹⁷ A more likely explanation is that in the early stages, some proprietors in consultation with their colleagues in London, felt some hesitancy to publish news that was unsubstantiated and

⁹⁴ Terhi Rantanen, ‘The struggle for control of domestic news markets’, in Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Terhi Rantanen (eds.), *The Globalization of News*, (London: Sage, 1998), pp. 35-48, p. 42.

⁹⁵ Susan Forde and Jane Johnston, ‘Australian Associated Press’, in Bridget Griffen-Foley (ed.), *A companion to the Australian media* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014), pp. 39-40, p. 39.

⁹⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 11 December 1936, p. 2923. Assuming this amounted to an official policy, evidence in support of this claim would surely have been recorded in the relevant files now held by the NAA. No further evidence in support of this was found within those surveyed during research for this thesis.

could be construed as critical of the King. They may have feared an adverse reaction from their Australian readers.

This reticence would not last. Perhaps as part of the rising appetite for American-style news, other Australian journalists and editors displayed great interest in the gossip. There can be no doubt that the information was available to readers of the American opinion pieces that were included in the 15 per cent of news originating from outside of Britain. By the 1930s, for example, Melbourne's *Table Talk* magazine was reproducing American-authored treatises expounding on romance and marriage.⁹⁸ As politician Eddie Ward would later exclaim, American articles available in Australia at that time were 'full of the King's relations with Mrs Simpson', and indicated 'some sort of alliance' between them.⁹⁹ Over the course of that winter, snippets of speculative narrative and images from the King's summer holiday made their way into the Australian press, albeit obliquely in some cases. By 27 August, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* had confirmed Wallis's presence on board the *Nahlin* but limited its discussion to her fashionable attire.¹⁰⁰

Others took the bolder step of printing photographs banned in Britain, and razored out of imported American magazines such as *Time*. On 1 September, for example, the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* published a photograph of the couple with Wallis's hand on the King's arm.¹⁰¹ Others dropped heavy hints. On 5 September, for example, the *Australian Women's Weekly* enthused over 'the charming American', one of the

⁹⁸ Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake, *Connected worlds: history in transnational perspective* (Canberra, A.C.T.: ANU E Press, 2005), p. 184.

⁹⁹ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 11 December 1936, p. 2911-12.

¹⁰⁰ 'YACHT'S LEISURELY TRIP IN MEDITERRANEAN', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 27 August 1936, p. 17.

¹⁰¹ 'STRIFE IN SPAIN: KING'S HOLIDAY: DANCE PERSONALITIES', *The Courier-Mail* Brisbane, Qld., 1 September 1936, p. 16. 'The *Sydney Morning Herald* also ran the photograph the following day but did not identify Wallis as such in the caption; 'KING'S HOLIDAY CRUISE IN THE ADRIATIC', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 2 September 1936, p. 18.

King's 'greatest friends.'¹⁰² *Truth* pronounced Wallis as evidence for Edward's preference for American 'straightforwardness', noting approvingly that 'it is certain that the King will do just what he likes' in choosing 'commoners' for his friends.¹⁰³ The *Adelaide Chronicle* of 10 September published a photograph of the couple above the caption 'King smiles on holiday.'¹⁰⁴ Although reporting across the country was sporadic, this demonstrates that, unlike in the case of Britain, attentive Australian readers capable of picking up some none-too-subtle clues had an opportunity to become conversant with the close relationship between Edward and Wallis several months before the abdication. **Image 28**

The High Commissioner steps in

In Britain, those within press and government circles remained tight-lipped over the course of the summer, perhaps hoping that the King's passion would diminish following the cruise. This did not eventuate and events progressed at speed following Baldwin's return from his own holidays in mid-October.¹⁰⁵ Sensing that the press's silence could not last, Alexander Hardinge, who had replaced the loyal Thomas as the King's Private Secretary, took steps of his own to assess the status of public opinion on a possible marriage. Although Hardinge's position was intended to provide close personal support to the monarch, the two men differed in many ways. As Williams explains, Hardinge was a 'man of absolute rectitude' whose conservatism was more closely tied with the previous court.¹⁰⁶ On 15 October, Hardinge wrote to the Canadian Governor-General, asking for a sense of the local reaction to the fervent gossip circulating in the American

¹⁰² 'King's Happy Time on Informal holiday', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 5 September 1936, p. 2.

¹⁰³ 'THE KING AND HIS FRIENDS', *Truth*, Sydney, N.S.W., 6 September 1936, p. 14.

¹⁰⁴ 'King on Holiday', *Chronicle*, Adelaide, S.A., 10 September 1936, p. 37.

¹⁰⁵ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, pp. 217-32; Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, pp. 292-94; Williams, *The People's King*, pp. 74-76.

¹⁰⁶ Williams, *The People's King*, pp. 73-74.

press. Lord Tweedsmuir replied that Canadian opinion was ‘most anxious and disquieting’ on the topic.¹⁰⁷

On the same day, the British press first became aware that Wallis’ divorce would be heard at Ipswich in the county of East Anglia the following week, giving the clearest indication thus far that she would soon be free to marry again. As Williams has pointed out, the decision to hold the action at the regional assizes, rather than wait for a trial at the High Court in London, implied haste and a clumsy attempt at discretion.¹⁰⁸ As Ziegler puts it ‘the news of what was in the wind spread panic in Whitehall.’¹⁰⁹ Baldwin consulted with Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of the *Times*, and a number of statesmen including Horace Wilson, his economic advisor. In contrast to the British press’ silence on proceedings, a concise cabled report on the forthcoming divorce suit of one of the King’s ‘guests’ appeared in several Australian papers.¹¹⁰ Scenting a sensation, *Truth*’s London correspondent travelled to Ipswich but was unable to find anyone willing to discuss the matter.¹¹¹ Although little was said, Australian journalists and their readers who were aware of the King’s existing relationship with Wallis would have had no trouble putting two and two together.

In the meantime, Baldwin visited Edward’s country home, Fort Belvedere, on 20 October to confront him about Wallis for the first time. The meeting was not a success; having ‘edged around the subject’, Baldwin ‘stayed to talk about the roses.’¹¹² Baldwin attempted to present himself as offering friendly advice and failed to negotiate any further action or decision. He also made no formal attempt to consult either the British

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 240.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *The People’s King*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁹ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 292.

¹¹⁰ For example, ‘SOCIETY WOMAN’S SUIT FOR DIVORCE’, *The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, Qld., 19 October 1936, p. 13.

¹¹¹ ‘MRS. SIMPSON WILL DIVORCE HUSBAND’, *Truth*, Sydney, N.S.W., 18 October 1936, p. 1.

¹¹² Beaverbrook, *The abdication of King Edward VIII*, p. 47.

Parliament or the Dominions on the matter.¹¹³ This is not to say, however, that Dominion opinion had not been sought on an informal and secret basis. According to unpublished notes prepared by Wilson, on 23 October, for example, Baldwin had a ‘long discussion’ with William Mackenzie King, the visiting prime minister of Canada.¹¹⁴ Mackenzie King had had an audience with Edward earlier that week and told Malcolm MacDonald, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, that he had ‘spoken very plainly’ about the negative ‘state of feeling’ in Canada.¹¹⁵

Significantly, Baldwin was also made confidentially aware of an Australian point of view. From the outset, Bruce, by now the influential High Commissioner of Australia to the United Kingdom, was opposed to the prospect of the King’s marriage. Following the end of his term as prime minister in 1929, Bruce had taken up the post in London in 1933. He was prominent in the London diplomatic community, influential in Australia’s relationship with Britain and, thanks to years of gossip conveyed by Casey, more than aware of the constitutional danger threatened by the revelation of the King’s private foibles. Bruce had taken no action that summer. Despite being ‘aware of the all the rumours and gossip that had been floating about’ he had not ‘taken them too seriously.’¹¹⁶ He did note that an Anzac soldier reportedly complained to him that it was ‘a bit thick, his [the King] taking that woman with him to Gallipoli’ during the *Nahlin*’s voyage to Turkey.¹¹⁷ After the divorce proceedings became publicly known however, Bruce felt obliged to arrange to speak with Baldwin on the matter. He intended to become well-informed enough to communicate the situation to Lyons, as well as some measure of his own personal opinion; to offer ‘the facts as I saw them.’¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 48.

¹¹⁴ TNA, CAB 127/157. H. Wilson, unpublished notes, undated, likely December 1936.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ NAA, M104, 4. Note by Bruce on conversation with Baldwin, 15 November 1936.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Lee, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce*, p. 120.

¹¹⁸ NAA, M104, 4. Note by Bruce on conversation with Baldwin, 15 November 1936.

It is certain that Bruce's resolve was, even at this early stage, unshakably in opposition to the marriage. Lee has shown that although the High Commissioner valued the authority exerted by the monarch's winning characteristics, he firmly believed this was best directed in support of the Crown. Bruce felt that 'the personal qualities of the monarch helped to bind individuals to the crown and through the crown to the nation and Empire.'¹¹⁹ His major concern was any potential threat to Australia's strategic position, given that uniform loyalty to the monarchy bolstered the relationship between the dominions and by extension Australia's prominence on the League of Nations council.¹²⁰

Bruce's concerns over future imperial cohesion were shared by the British bureaucracy and press. On 26 October, Dawson showed to Hardinge and Baldwin a letter to *The Times* from a British man living in America and signing himself 'Britannicus in Partibus Infidelium.'¹²¹ This vehement piece was supposedly illustrative of the growing outrage in Canadian and British-American ex-patriate circles to the moral conduct of the King. The seemingly straightforward resolution of the Simpsons' divorce on 27 October also marked a milestone in the emerging abdication incident. Ernest Simpson had offered no defence and the presiding judge at Ipswich Assizes agreed to a *decree nisi* with a six-month compulsory waiting period.¹²² This ruling allowed for further investigation if required or the presentation of additional evidence. Although the results of the case were widely reprinted in Australian regional and metropolitan newspapers, the press still refrained from speculation. The *Cairns Post*, for example, on 29 October simply referred to Wallis as the King's 'guest.'¹²³ In Canberra,

¹¹⁹ Lee, *Stanley Melbourne Bruce*, p. 119.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Meaning 'a Briton among infidels.'

¹²² TNA, J 162/1. Application for Registrar's Certificate, Simpson (W) against Simpson (EA), High Court of Justice, 16 September 1936.

¹²³ 'DIVORCE DECREE', *Cairns Post*, Cairns, Qld., 29 October 1936, p. 7.

still no mention of the unfolding incident had been formally communicated to Lyons.

Lyons contains the matter

The prime minister could not remain unaware for long. By early November, Australian newspaper speculation was rife. More than three weeks before the news broke in the British press, Australian journalists were quick to introduce the prospect of abdication, giving their interested readers the chance to become conversant with the issues at stake at an early stage. Editorial commentary began to appear to supplement the cabled reports from overseas. At this stage, the tone was not noticeably judgemental and journalists seem merely gleeful at the prospect of a scoop. For example, referring to ‘American files just to hand’, one editorial of 10 November gave a breathless account of the King’s dilemma, the unsuspecting nature of the majority of the British public, and the possibility of abdication in favour of his brother.¹²⁴ On 14 November, *Smith’s Weekly* pounced on the ‘flood of fantastic yankee prophesies’ on the likelihood of the ‘Baltimore girl’ becoming Queen.¹²⁵ Although quick to condemn the ‘flagrant and objectionable discussion’ of the American scandal sheets, the *Perth Mirror* also speculated on the King’s eagerness to cast aside some of the ‘old ideas’ and the attraction of a ‘bond of union’ offered by an American-British marriage.¹²⁶ The tone was not at this stage negative. The *Mirror*, for example, sympathetically offered that ‘whomever and whenever he elects to marry, his choice is sure to be popular with his people.’¹²⁷

¹²⁴ ‘A Strange Story’, *The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, N.S.W., 10 November 1936, p. 4.

¹²⁵ ‘Flood of fantastic yankee prophesies’, *Smith’s Weekly*, Sydney, N.S.W., 14 November 1936, p. 8.

¹²⁶ ‘Will The King Marry A Commoner??’, *Mirror*, Perth, W.A., 14 November 1936, p. 11.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

In Whitehall, anxiety increased as to the effects of a scandal on imperial cohesion. Howell Gwynne, doyen of the Newspaper Proprietors Association, warned Baldwin that the ‘Great Silence’ would not last and that the resulting sensational coverage would be a ‘deadly blow’ to the monarchy.¹²⁸ Bruce also capitalised on several informal opportunities to present his point of view. On 13 November, the High Commissioner met for lunch with Hardinge.¹²⁹ Drawing on his experience, Bruce indicated that Australia would not support the proposed marriage, a meeting that almost certainly influenced Hardinge to take matters into his own hands. The same day he penned a letter of admonishment to the King, outlining in no uncertain terms the government’s growing alarm over his intention to marry, and the strained nature of the press’s silence on the matter.¹³⁰ He urged the King to send Wallis out of the country without further delay.¹³¹ Two days later, Bruce was also able to discuss the matter at length with Baldwin, when he ‘told him of the serious view that was being taken in Australia.’¹³²

This meeting between Bruce and Baldwin marks the entry of Australia into the discussion. Although informal, it nonetheless determined the ultimate direction of the Australian government. The two men agreed that British people had, given the reclusive domesticity of King George V, ‘become accustomed to a high moral standard in the Court’ and that any marital scandal would damage ‘the prestige of the Crown.’¹³³ Bruce pressed upon Baldwin ‘the alarming and devastating possibility’ that Edward should marry Wallis, noting it would be ‘impossible to calculate the consequences.’ His

¹²⁸ TNA, PREM 1/446. Letter to Baldwin from Gwynne, 12 November 1936.

¹²⁹ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 240.

¹³⁰ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 297.

¹³¹ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 236.

¹³² TNA, CAB 127/157. H. Wilson, unpublished notes, undated, likely December 1936. It is not clear on what evidence Bruce had drawn this opinion of unfolding attitudes in Australia given he had not, it is believed, at this point raised the issue with Lyons. It is possible that he had also been in contact with other colleagues in Canberra in the interim, or perhaps he meant that the matter had passed into the public realm and commentary could only be expected.

¹³³ NAA, M104, 4. Note by Bruce on conversation with Baldwin, 15 November 1936

opinion was that Australians ‘would never accept the woman as Queen.’¹³⁴ The two men feared the revelation of damaging allegations of Edward’s role in the Simpson divorce and were also aware that the press’ silence could not last.¹³⁵

Bruce summarised these arguments in a further communication sent the following day.¹³⁶ Despite lacking input from Lyons, he assured Baldwin that ‘in any action you decide to take’, he could be confident of ‘any measure of support my Prime Minister can render you.’¹³⁷ Baldwin would go on to place particular emphasis on Bruce and Mackenzie King’s advice as a reliable indicator of public and government attitudes during his next meeting with the King on 16 November. He drew attention to ‘the state of feeling throughout the Empire, on which he had received some very direct and significant information’ from Bruce.¹³⁸ Edward confirmed that his mind was made up, stating the oft-quoted line ‘I am going to marry Mrs Simpson, and I am prepared to go.’¹³⁹ He subsequently told his mother and brothers of his intentions and so decisively committed himself to this course of action. From this perspective, the abdication episode was effectively over without any formal political debate and before the general public had access to any official information.

The British press’s silence was close to disintegration. On 18 November, Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson asked a question in the House of Commons referring to the censorship of incoming American magazines. ‘What is this thing the British public are not allowed to know?’ she asked.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, the nature of the ‘thing’ was directly articulated to an Australian readership the same day. The Perth *Daily News*, for

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ NAA, M104, 4. Letter to Baldwin from Bruce, 16 November 1936.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ TNA, CAB 127/157. H. Wilson, unpublished notes, undated, likely December 1936. Baldwin also told the King there was an uneasy feeling ‘about the circumstances of the divorce’ (i.e. that the King was involved in some respect).

¹³⁹ Fairbanks, ‘Australia and the abdication crisis, 1936’, p. 297.

¹⁴⁰ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 251-52.

example, displayed no reticence, reprinting a large photograph of Wallis under the heading ‘Mrs Simpson stories censored?’¹⁴¹ While newspaper references to date had been mostly non-committal, the salient details were nonetheless in circulation. It seems certain that many Australians found it a topic of great interest, although they were slow to judge one way or another. At this stage, the public mostly waited and digested the news.

If it were evident by this stage that the King’s actions were close to becoming public knowledge in Britain, it was also becoming apparent that the tendering of the Dominions’ advice needed to be formalised and consistent with the stipulations of the Statute of Westminster. Oscar Dowson, the Legal Advisor to the Foreign Office, was one of the first bureaucrats to query whether this was not a matter ‘in which the ministers of the Dominions equally have an interest and a duty to tender advice?’ Admitting that the consolidation of any forthcoming contradictory advice ‘bristles with difficulty’, he concluded that

an open and general scandal affecting the foundations of the monarchy is a matter in which the Dominions must be concerned equally with the U.K.¹⁴²

At the same time, tensions further increased after the King toured the destitute mining villages of south Wales on 18 and 19 November. ‘Something must be done’, he said in response to meeting with poverty-stricken residents.¹⁴³ As Williams has explained, for Baldwin this was the final straw and ‘yet one more example in which he seemed to side with the working-class against those in power.’ The King’s lack of political *nous* sparked a fervent clamour in the labour press, reigniting longstanding fears of a communist takeover and a reprisal of hunger marches by the unemployed to

¹⁴¹ ‘MRS. SIMPSON STORIES CENSORED?’, *The Daily News*, Perth, W.A., 18 November 1936, p. 2.

¹⁴² TNA, DO 121/38. Letter to C. Schuster from O. Dowson, 17 November 1936.

¹⁴³ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 301.

London.¹⁴⁴ Baldwin construed these comments as a criticism of the government's lack of intervention that seemed to further confirm Edward's unsuitability as an apolitical monarch. It was timely therefore that, on his return from Wales, the King first broached the prospect of morganatic marriage with Baldwin as an option to allow him to remain on the throne. The prime minister commented that he felt sure the House of Commons would not assent to the legislation required, but offered to think it over and consult his Cabinet.¹⁴⁵

In agreeing to Baldwin's offer, the King committed a major tactical error. This shifted the problem from one of conservative and ecclesiastical opposition to Wallis' supposed morality, to a simple legislative matter that could be easily rejected. In committing to an official course of action, Edward was bound to accept the advice of his government.¹⁴⁶ If he did not, the government would be forced to resign, creating a constitutional upheaval of unprecedented magnitude for the Empire. The repercussions for the Australian government, and by extension the constitutionally-appointed roles of Governor-General and state Governors, was uncertain. The chaos may have provided an opportunity for the Dominions to reevaluate their constitutional obligations against their own nationalistic needs. Baldwin therefore required the consistent agreement of all of the Dominions to be able to proceed with the course already charted and avert any dissent.¹⁴⁷ This highlights the importance of the Dominions' supportive opinion, and the manner in which this was manipulated by Baldwin in forcing the King to abdicate. It

¹⁴⁴ Williams, *The People's King*, pp. 122-23.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, CAB 127/157. H. Wilson, unpublished notes, undated, likely December 1936.

¹⁴⁶ The situation was complex; although the King's marriage was exempt from the Royal Marriages Act, as Donaldson puts it, 'it is a difficult question but the history of the abdication seems to prove that the sovereign is free to choose his or her own consort providing his choice is approved by the Prime Minister and government of the day. If on the other hand he chooses someone generally regarded as unsuitable to be Queen, it in fact becomes a constitutional matter.' Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 247.

¹⁴⁷ For further discussion of the legislative context, see Murphy, *Monarchy and the end of empire*, pp. 16-19.

also shows the arbitrary lines of moral distinction drawn by a small number of influential politicians.

Duly, on 27 November, Baldwin met with Cabinet. Not unsurprisingly, the suggestion to introduce new legislation to allow for a morganatic marriage was soundly rejected, but nonetheless steps were taken to consult the Dominion governments in order to finalise this decision. Hardinge took it upon himself to send a telegram to the Australian Governor-General, Alexander Gore Arkwright Hore-Ruthven, on 27 November advising of the serious developments arising.¹⁴⁸ The following day, formal advice outlining the situation was received by the British High Commissioner's office in Canberra, as well as those of each of the other Dominions.¹⁴⁹ The draft had been prepared for Baldwin by MacDonald with the assistance of Batterbee, and Cabinet Secretary Maurice Hankey.¹⁵⁰

Interpreted by Beaverbrook as 'words of disaster for the King', this telegram did nothing to put forward Edward's perspective and was delivered in such a way as to engender a response supportive of the government's stand against the marriage.¹⁵¹ This strategy sought to remove the King from the throne as quickly as possible, by garnering the Dominions' support to block any new legislation that would allow him to marry Wallis.¹⁵² Following a summary of Baldwin's communication with the King and his 'fixed intention' to marry, it outlined three options concerning the morganatic proposal. Firstly, that Edward marry Wallis and she become Queen; secondly, that he marry her

¹⁴⁸ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Hore-Ruthven from Hardinge, 27 November 1936.

¹⁴⁹ In Lyons, *So we take comfort*, p. 249, Enid Lyons claims that the telegram of 28 November 1936 was the first intimation Joseph Lyons had received on the matter. According to protocol, all communication from Baldwin and the British Government was in the first instance collectively conveyed by the Dominions Office to the relevant High Commissioner or Governor-General. In Australia, Geoffrey Whiskard then circulated the information to the prime minister and state governors as necessary.

¹⁵⁰ TNA, CAB 127/156. Note of a meeting of Ministers, 27 November 1936.

¹⁵¹ Beaverbrook, *The abdication of King Edward VIII*, p. 60.

¹⁵² Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, pp. 261-63; Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, pp. 305-07; Williams, *The People's King*, pp. 124-32.

without abdication but on the basis that she would not become Queen and accompanied by the necessary legislation to achieve this basis; or thirdly, that Edward voluntarily abdicate in favour of the Duke of York.¹⁵³

Bloch has assessed this correspondence as ‘not in the least impartial, but a political canvassing operation in favour of abdication.’¹⁵⁴ The text conveyed Baldwin’s personal opinion on the introduction of legislation to allow for a morganatic marriage. He felt ‘convinced’ that neither his government nor the British public here would accept either a morganatic marriage or Wallis as Queen.¹⁵⁵ While he was of course entitled to put forward the British government’s point of view, this was misleading. As Williams’ work has demonstrated, when speaking of the ‘public’, Baldwin was most likely alluding to the influential members of the Establishment and upper-classes, and not the working and middle-classes who comprised the majority of the population and for whom sexual modernity allowed for a more sympathetic attitude to divorce. Baldwin was effectively asking the prime ministers to approve a course of action already instigated by the British government as a *fait accompli*.

The prime ministers were also restricted from consulting in a democratic manner. The British government was anxious to avoid ‘leakage’ prior to the passing of any legislation, an anxiety that extended to forbidding Dominion prime ministers from mentioning the issue to their Cabinets.¹⁵⁶ Baldwin advised that the prime ministers would be asked to consult more broadly at some later stage, but could then only consult

¹⁵³ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Dominion prime ministers from Baldwin, 28 November 1936.

¹⁵⁴ Bloch, *The reign and abdication of Edward VIII*, p. 153.

¹⁵⁵ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 305.

¹⁵⁶ TNA, CAB 127/156. Note of a meeting of Ministers, 2 December 1936.

‘one or two’ colleagues in ‘absolute secrecy.’ Baldwin asked only for their private views on the likely public response in each Dominion.¹⁵⁷

In Acton, Canberra, the British High Commissioner, Geoffrey Whiskard, and his office staff had the task of deciphering and circulating incoming secret coded telegrams to the prime minister, a few miles distant at Provisional Parliament House in the suburb of Parkes. This was the only secure means of communication. Whiskard immediately communicated Baldwin’s message to Lyons, who was about to leave for Melbourne. He also sent on another message from London on 29 November, in which Bruce indicated his strong support for Baldwin’s objective to finalise the matter swiftly, writing that Australia’s acquiescence would ‘greatly assist’ the situation.¹⁵⁸ Writing that marriage to Wallis would not ‘be accepted by people either Great Britain or other parts of Empire’, Bruce saw no distinction between the possible British and Australian reaction.¹⁵⁹

Whiskard described how, upon receiving this news from Britain, Lyons had expressed deepest shock.¹⁶⁰ Nonetheless, his mind was immediately and resolutely made up. To this decision, we can attribute what we know of Lyons’ attitude that the monarch should be a figurehead ‘set apart and above the common things of everyday.’¹⁶¹ As per Bruce’s urgings, he dismissed Baldwin’s first two options ‘at once’ and assumed the third would be the only possible solution. He agreed that the ‘domestic traditions of the late Monarch’ could be revived in the figure of the Duke of York, ‘a worthy successor’ whose accession would be met with ‘deepest relief and satisfaction throughout Australia.’¹⁶² Unable to discuss the matter broadly within Parliament and with the Opposition, Lyons turned to a small number of his senior ministers; the Deputy

¹⁵⁷ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Dominion prime ministers from Baldwin, 28 November 1936.

¹⁵⁸ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegraph to Lyons from Bruce, 29 November 1936.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram 2/2 to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 30 November 1936.

¹⁶¹ Lyons, *So we take comfort*, p. 145.

¹⁶² TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram 2/2 to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 30 November 1936.

prime minister, Earle Page, Richard Casey, who had by then taken up the position of Treasurer, and the Attorney-General, Robert Menzies. All ‘acquiesced in the opinions given.’¹⁶³ On 30 November, Whiskard informed the Dominions Office that Lyons and his colleagues were ‘unanimously and emphatically’ in favour of abdication.¹⁶⁴

Ultimately, Australia’s formal response to the possible introduction of legislation to allow for the King’s morganatic marriage was therefore determined by a handful of politicians of the dominant party. Sworn to secrecy, even if they had wished to, options to determine public opinion were limited.

This also meant that no reference to the scandal had been made within Parliament, and Curtin remained uninformed. However, the limited yet explosive press coverage meant that in some cases Australian journalists and readers were quickly becoming as well informed as members of the Opposition. Also on 30 November, several newspapers had remarked at length and in no uncertain terms on the rumoured desire of the King to marry Wallis.¹⁶⁵ The text referred to the opposition faced by the King from the Church and conservative government. Of greatest consternation to Whiskard was the claim that the matter had been the subject of ‘earnest consideration’ in court and ‘ministerial circles’, although entirely absent from Australian parliamentary debates.¹⁶⁶ As Collings later pointed out in the Senate, most objectionable was the insinuation that the Dominion prime ministers were privy to secret discussions with Britain.¹⁶⁷ Following several months of speculation gleaned directly from American press reports, the story broke in Australia well before Britain, and became public knowledge prior to any discussion within the Australian government.

¹⁶³ Lyons, *So we take comfort*, p. 251.

¹⁶⁴ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram 1/2 to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 30 November 1936.

¹⁶⁵ For example, ‘THE KING’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 30 November 1936, p. 11.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram 2/2 to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 1 December 1936.

¹⁶⁷ Parliament of Australia, Senate, ‘Debates’, 10 December 1936, p. 2887.

This unusual situation is revealing not only of the attitudes of the press during a time of national debate, but also its complex relationship to the formation of public opinion. As Mort argues of the British context, the diversity of responses to Edward's abdication demonstrated that 'ordinary' observers were well-able to sift through the conflicted offerings of the mass communications industry and the Establishment in order to draw their own conclusions.¹⁶⁸ In Australia too, changing social codes such as greater public scrutiny of the longstanding ethical conduct of high politics and a growing awareness of the right of the individual to self-expression, were also brought to bear on local perceptions of the incident. In any case, the fragmented transfer of press information, gossip and sentiment placed the Australian public in an unequalled position, possibly unusual among the Dominions, to consider this dramatic reappraisal of the King's suitability for his role.

All is revealed

With assistance from Menzies, Lyons responded formally to Baldwin's telegram on 1 December.¹⁶⁹ In keeping with Bruce's advice, he expressed only support for Baldwin's actions and the King's abdication. Edward was 'extremely popular', Lyons wrote, but he anticipated 'widespread condemnation' of a marriage to Wallis. The morganatic option, he felt, also ran 'counter to [the] best popular conception of Royal Family' and that a 'grave weakening' of loyalty would eventuate unless the King abdicated. He indicated that in his view, any such marriage would generate substantial change in Australian attitudes towards the royal family and their idealised reputation for

¹⁶⁸ Mort, 'Love in a Cold Climate', pp. 27-29.

¹⁶⁹ Lyons, *So we take comfort*, p. 251.

domesticity. Offering his sympathy for Baldwin's predicament, Lyons signed off 'sure that your action and attitude correct.'¹⁷⁰

The archival record reveals that Lyons was at the outset anxious to communicate widely within the Australian government. He feared that his Ministers would be 'greatly upset' if the matter became public before they were informed.¹⁷¹ These honourable intentions did not eventuate in time. All the while, parliamentarians were acquiring the bulk of their understanding of the situation from the newspapers. Lyons himself was operating on limited information and the difference in time zones made it difficult to advance any queries and receive a response within reasonable working hours. Distance and the need to communicate in secret code, rather than making use of unsecured telephone or radio networks effectively limited any negotiation.¹⁷²

The following day, 2 December, Lyons received Baldwin's summary of the individual Dominion responses, excepting New Zealand. Despite lacking this advice from Labour prime minister Michael Savage, Baldwin noted that he perceived a 'general agreement as to best course in present circumstances', before again requesting continuing secrecy.¹⁷³ However, the collated responses were not as consistent as Baldwin intimated. Ziegler's statement that 'certainly, Baldwin had grounds for contending that the Dominions would not accept Wallis either as Queen or morganatic consort' simplifies a complex reality.¹⁷⁴ All four Dominion prime ministers expressed different views, both personal and in regard to their opinion of the public response. The conservative James Hertzog of the Union of South Africa was the most assured,

¹⁷⁰ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Baldwin from Lyons, [?]29 November 1936 [elsewhere dated 1 December 1936].

¹⁷¹ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram 2/2 to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 1 December 1936.

¹⁷² During the course of proceedings, 333 secret telegrams were sent by the Dominions Office and 90 were received. Trusted staff worked day and night cyphering and deciphering the messages. TNA, DO 121/41. Document titled 'Dominions No 173 Secret Print:', undated, likely December 1936.

¹⁷³ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Whiskard from Dominions Office, 2 December 1936.

¹⁷⁴ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 307.

describing abdication as ‘the lesser of two very grave evils.’ He viewed the matter as one with repercussion for the Empire at a time when the Crown was ‘a vital necessity to [a] whole world in unrest and revolution.’¹⁷⁵

New Zealand’s reply, when it came, was however distinctly sympathetic to the King. Savage had not heard of Wallis prior to the arrival of the telegram and had to ask his Governor-General for enlightenment.¹⁷⁶ Given the ‘great affection’ felt in New Zealand for the King and the peoples’ desire for ‘his happiness’, Savage hoped that ‘some such arrangement might be approved’ to legislate for a morganatic marriage, although he conceded that New Zealand would be guided by Britain and a collective desire for imperial unity.¹⁷⁷ Given Savage’s lack of quotable objections, Beaverbrook later alleged that Baldwin took steps to ‘secure a reply favourable to his own designs’ and interviewed Walter Nash, a New Zealand Minister visiting London, in an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a more hostile opinion.¹⁷⁸

Canada’s reply was equally measured. Although Mackenzie King viewed abdication as ‘the honourable and right course’, he alone of the Dominion prime ministers seemed aware of the pitfalls surrounding the British government’s collation of the responses. Canadian Parliament had been fiercely protective of its independence and the equality of the relationship between the King and the Dominions since adopting the terms of both the Balfour Declaration in 1926 and the Statute of Westminster in 1931, thus bringing constitutional issues under its own control.¹⁷⁹ Although avowing that Canada did not support the morganatic option, Mackenzie King was at pains to state his

¹⁷⁵ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Whiskard from Dominions Office, 3 December 1936.

¹⁷⁶ Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 263.

¹⁷⁷ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Whiskard from Dominions Office, 3 December 1936.

¹⁷⁸ Beaverbrook, *The abdication of King Edward VIII*, p. 62.

¹⁷⁹ For further discussion, see Andrew Heard, ‘Canadian independence’, <<http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/324/Independence.html>>, accessed 11 May 2014. The prime minister himself had throughout his public life advocated for a direct and equitable relationship between the King and his Dominion representatives, and independence in constitutional matters.

distance from any machinations that forced abdication as ‘imposed by Ministers’, rather than voluntarily by Edward.¹⁸⁰

Within this context, Lyons’ response is most comparable with the forthright support for abdication offered by Hertzog, and certainly less sympathetic to Edward than other Dominion prime ministers. However, it was Lyons’ decision on 2 December to send a second, more forcefully expressed telegram that earned for Australia the reputation as the most opposed to the King. He claimed that even if the King abandoned his marriage plans, the ‘situation had passed the possibility of compromise’, public confidence being ‘so shaken that no course is possible.’¹⁸¹ At this point, there was still little sense of Australian public opinion on the matter, as reflected in the nation’s newspapers at least, and so Lyons’ reiteration of Australia’s opposition is at first puzzling. Clearly, nonetheless, he had his urgers. Although unsigned and undated, a letter held within his personal correspondence demonstrates some identical sentiments to those communicated to Westminster.¹⁸² This offered to ‘put bluntly’, the ‘views of British-Australians’:

The King must abdicate – for we can no longer have any respect for him ... for a King who would think so little of his empire that he could plunge it (as he has done) into sorrow, distress and humiliation ... he has done the thing that is not done by decent men ... [he has] lowered British prestige, in the eyes of other nations ... Where is his sense of honour? Where is his sense of ordinary decency and conduct? ... It will break the loyalty of all British subjects. Without respect, there can be no loyalty. If that woman were recognised as a wife or Queen, or openly paraded as mistress, then many of us would renounce our British nationality, there would be undoubtedly a sharp move of hearts away from any country or government that countenanced it. Stand firm, Mr Lyons ... For the sake of Britain, for the sake of the Empire, and for the sake of the Church, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. We will not have such a woman on the throne.

¹⁸⁰ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Whiskard from Dominions Office, 3 December 1936.

¹⁸¹ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 2 December 1936.

¹⁸² This is the sole private piece of correspondence relating to the matter that was transferred to the NLA’s collections, although official correspondence to Lyons on the matter is held by the NAA.

Let the King abdicate at once.¹⁸³

Whether or not it was prompted by this singular expression of opposition to the King on moral grounds, Lyons' second telegram was to be significant in the resolution of the affair. On 2 December, the British Cabinet formally rejected the morganatic proposal and Baldwin visited the King at Fort Belvedere, where he informed him of these developments, and provided an overview of feeling in the Dominions. He did not mention Savage's moderate response and he showed Edward only this second telegram from Lyons indicating that Australian public confidence had been wholly lost.¹⁸⁴ This indicates that the Australian response was, although not misrepresented as such, manipulated to serve Baldwin's purposes. Baldwin wished to present the Dominions as unequivocally opposed to the proposed marriage. Lyons' decision to support Baldwin meant that he acquiesced to the majority of the British government's points as suggestions rather than requests for advice. However, as Mansergh has noted, to offer 'support for a course of action already chartered is not the same thing as a determination of that course.'¹⁸⁵

With the scandal already a topic of discussion in Australia, the British press' extended silence was coming to an end. On 1 December, Bishop Blunt of Bradford had delivered in a sermon what appeared to be a mild criticism of the King's morals and attitude to Christianity, an act that decisively loosened the British press gag. Within hours, the Australian press published unambiguous reference to the forthcoming revelation, although restraint was not entirely abandoned. Although promising on 2 December to reveal the 'Foundation For Gossip', the *Maitland Daily Mercury* stopped

¹⁸³ NLA, MS 4851, Joseph A. Lyons papers. Letter to Lyons from unknown correspondent, undated, likely 2 December 1936. The content of this piece of correspondence is reflective of what was known on this date of the King's dilemma and the actions of the Australian government.

¹⁸⁴ Beaverbrook, *The abdication of King Edward VIII*, p. 62; Donaldson, *Edward VIII*, p. 267.

¹⁸⁵ Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth affairs*, p. 44.

short of mentioning abdication but hinted that the rumours concerned Wallis.¹⁸⁶

Similarly, the Burnie *Advocate* reproduced Blunt's comments under the headline 'Disquieting American Statements' but avoided further elaboration.¹⁸⁷ Overnight, the story broke in Britain and would generate the beginnings of a wave of discussion that would also engulf Australia from 3 December.

This chapter has provided a narrative for the decline of Edward's popularity from an Australian perspective following the triumph of his royal tour of 1920, and charted the response of the Australian press and Lyons government to news of the King's scandalous behaviour following his ascension. Although the exchange of correspondence demonstrates that Australia's role was simply that of supporting a course of action decided upon and implemented by the British government, the fact that the Opposition was not consulted despite the matter's diplomatic importance forced Lyons into an undeserved position of appearing to have colluded with Baldwin. This was only one aspect of the reception of the news in Australia, to which we now turn.

¹⁸⁶ 'British Press Discusses Life of the King', *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, N.S.W., 2 December 1936, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ 'BISHOP PUBLICLY REPROVES KING', *Advocate*, Burnie, Tas., 3 December 1936, p. 1.

Chapter 5: A condemned man

Many more as well as myself will never rise to their feet again on hearing the national anthem if he marries her.

-Nellie Davies, 8 December 1936.¹

An examination of the contours of Australian press and public reaction to news of the King's proposed marriage and its implications in the week following the first mention in the British press on 3 December and the irrevocable confirmation of Edward's abdication a little over a week later allows us to test the view Lyons conveyed to the British government. Was Lyons correct when he insisted that the Australian people were not in favour of the King's proposed marriage, and that abdication could be the only honourable option for a man condemned from the outset by public opinion? What other subtleties characterised Australian political, press and public opinion during these few days?

This chapter is structured in four successive increments, beginning with the period between Thursday 3 and Saturday 5 December 1936, when early press reports on the Australian government's then unacknowledged role in the incident begin to gather pace. I then move to a discussion of the trends of Australian public opinion between Sunday 6 and Monday 7 December, and how the commentary increased as the Australian government failed to issue any statement between Tuesday 8 and Wednesday 9 December. This chapter concludes with an account of the final confirmation of the end of the King's reign on Thursday 10 December and Lyons' official radio broadcast during the early hours of Friday 11 December.

¹ NLA, MS 1538/1/1283. Letter to Hughes from Davies, 8 December 1936.

Press commentary gathers pace

As shown in the previous chapter, the Australian press had since the previous July reported plenty of information about Edward's relationship and its impact on his Kingship. After the revelation of the news in Britain on 3 December, Australian editors abandoned all reticence. The days that followed were marked by the unrestrained publication of reports from British and American papers. This offered Australians a comprehensive understanding of the international response, and when coupled with some degree of advance warning, may have given some readers a well-informed understanding of the issues at stake and, therefore, time to develop a more considered stance on the marriage.

Unfortunately for Lyons, the loquaciousness of the press rendered his contrasting silence on the role of the government all the more acute. On 3 December, the *Maitland Daily Mercury* published a frank report syndicated from the British tabloids that painstakingly outlined the implications of the King's negotiations. It noted that British administrators had paid 'particular attention' to reports from Dominion governments, and raised the startling possibility of the resignation of all the King's governments.² To any reader, it was clear that the Australian government were not only aware of proceedings but, if reports were to be believed, had played an active role in the consultation process. Faced with a deafening silence from Canberra, alarmed politicians and members of the public could ignore the matter no longer.

Lyons, meanwhile, faced an unenviable impasse. Despite his best efforts, Baldwin's approval to share the situation with his Cabinet, at least, was not forthcoming. Despite the press' revelations, no word of any constitutional difficulty was mentioned at the final meeting of Parliament the same day. As the lower House session

² 'Grave Crisis Revealed In Britain', *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, N.S.W., 3 December 1936, p. 1.

was drawing to a close and plans made for a recess until February the following year, it became clear to all members that the issue was being avoided. This was too much for federal members of the Lang Labor faction, a radical breakaway faction of the ALP led by New South Wales politician Jack Lang, the domineering former state Treasurer who had been on conversational terms with the Prince in 1920. Joseph Gander took the step of boldly referring to the ‘disquieting’ news ‘concerning certain events in Great Britain.’ Had the Australian government been consulted, and if so what was the decision?, he asked. Parliament and the Australian people should be entitled to some sort of official pronouncement, he reasoned.³ Labor member Albert Green also appealed to the prime minister to ‘allay our fears’ over what had occurred.⁴

To their consternation, Lyons responded emphatically that ‘neither the British government, nor any other authority, has asked the Government for an expression of opinion.’⁵ Strictly speaking, this was correct as his own personal opinion had been sought, rather than the government’s official advice. This manifestly inadequate response was unlikely to keep the questioners at bay for long. As Whiskard pointed out to the Dominions Office, Lyons faced ‘great and increasing difficulty’ in concealing the situation. Further untrammelled discussion in the press over the coming weekend would more than likely give rise to a ‘politically awkward’ situation, to say the least.⁶

In England, Baldwin was busily engaged in delicate negotiations to subdue once and for all the King’s morganatic marriage proposal. Noting that ‘the less opportunity for public discussion and debate, the better’, he proceeded with the drafting of a bill to legislate the ‘voluntary’ abdication.⁷ He advised the Dominion prime ministers that the popular press in Britain had revived the idea of a morganatic marriage, but regardless

³ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 3 December 1936, p. 2878.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2879.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 3 December 1936.

⁷ TNA, DO 121/32. Telegram to Dominion prime ministers from Baldwin, 3 December 1936.

felt this would be unacceptable to ‘the overwhelming majority of people in this country.’ In any case, he concluded that any extended press coverage was ‘obviously extremely undesirable.’⁸ He intended to make an announcement in the House of Commons that Friday, 4 December, before the matter could gain momentum in the press over the weekend, and he assumed the Dominions agreed that the morganatic option was not to be pursued further. For the first time, he also suggested they communicate directly with the King, it being ‘proper that [he] should know the views of his other governments.’⁹ There was never any suggestion that the official views of these governments would differ substantially from that previously intimated to Baldwin by the prime ministers in an unofficial capacity.

Knowing also that the Dominion governments had been entitled at any stage to communicate directly with the King on their own terms, Baldwin was anxious to dispel any scent of collusion with this show of inclusivity during the final moments. In his examination of Baldwin’s resultant address to the House of Commons, Halford Ryan shows how the prime minister successfully presented the King’s insistence on consideration of the morganatic marriage as an indictment of his moral character, that is, that he would go to any lengths to have his way, including excluding his children from their right of succession and accepting a lower status for his wife.¹⁰

At the same time, alarmed by the apparent swing of British popular support for a morganatic marriage, Baldwin forbade Edward from speaking publicly and with that prohibition, removed any hope of him winning the people over with a personal appeal. Radio represented Edward’s best chance to reach even the most far-flung people of the

⁸ TNA, DO 121/32. Telegram 1/3 to Dominion prime ministers from Baldwin, 4 December 1936.

⁹ TNA, DO 121/32. Telegram 2/3 to Dominion prime ministers from Baldwin, 4 December 1936.

¹⁰ Halford Ryan, ‘Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin vs. King Edward VIII’, in Halford Ryan (ed.), *Oratorical encounters: Selected studies and sources of twentieth-century political accusations and apologies*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 53-62, p. 55.

Empire in their own homes, and communicate directly his feelings at the situation.

Knowing this, Edward had drafted a heartfelt message appealing for ‘hearers to reflect calmly and quietly’ on his desire to marry Wallis and offering to ‘go away for a while’, but Baldwin stood firm, describing the proposed broadcast as ‘unconstitutional’ as the text could only be given on advice of his Ministers, who would then ‘be responsible for every word of it.’¹¹

The following days were critical to the shaping of Australian public opinion on the matter. According to Lord Hartington, the Under Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, who happened to be in Australia at the time, by 4 December many people in Melbourne were ‘profoundly disturbed’ by the news from London.¹² Whether he meant in sympathy or opposition to the King’s predicament remains unclear. However, the major conservative metropolitan Victorian papers had already been quick to take a definitive stance, and so their editorials doubtless assisted in the crystallisation of opinion in their readership. These early journalistic accounts reduced the issue to an impasse between the King and his advisors, settling firmly in support of the latter. The 4 December edition of the *Argus*, for example, made its position clear with a comprehensive reprint of the opinion espoused by the *London Times*. The text flatly refused to countenance a marriage with Wallis as anything other than conflicting with the King’s leadership responsibilities, all the more critical in light of looming war in Europe. ‘A King’s path can never be easy, at least for a King who has reached middle-age without the blessing of a happy marriage’, the editor acknowledged, but:

neither the King, the nation, nor the Empire can afford that the influence of the great office he holds should be weakened. If ever His Majesty’s private inclination were to conflict openly with his public duty, and were allowed to prevail, there is no doubt that mischief and

¹¹ TNA, DO 121/32. Telegram 3/3 to Dominion prime ministers from Baldwin, 4 December 1936.

¹² TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram to Dominions Office from Hartington, 4 December 1936. Lord Hartington was visiting Australia to attend the centenary of South Australia celebrations.

danger would result ... The high office that the King holds is no man's personal possession. It is a sacred trust handed down from generation to generation.¹³

The Age of the same day similarly reserved editorial judgement of its own, but offered a precis of British and American reporting, underscored the issue as one of a conflicting 'crisis' between the feckless King and his learned statesmen, from whom he had 'refused to take advice', an act signalling significant repercussions to the Empire.¹⁴ The stance taken by these major publications demonstrates an initial expectation that the King not only should, but most likely would, fall into line and forgo personal his happiness in favour of his preordained duties to the Empire. The situation was the same in New South Wales, where the conservative *Sydney Morning Herald* pronounced that the King should 'renounce his heart's most intimate human aspiration', and 'make the highest possible personal sacrifice for the enhancement of the Monarchy and all it means to the great Empire.' If he were able to do this, the editorial concluded, his subjects themselves would also, 'in their turn, make every due sacrifice for the national welfare.'¹⁵ Even though the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* devoted several paragraphs praising the auspicious beginnings of the King's reign and his 'unflagging energy' in completing his duties thus far, the editor nonetheless concluded that 'he cannot choose to please himself only; it is a matter that deeply affects the monarchy and the Empire.'¹⁶

As public awareness increased, the weekend also marked the start of reporting that indicated the significant role of the Dominion prime ministers in supporting Baldwin's position. This would have come as a surprise to Australian readers, even more alarming when juxtaposed against the lack of any corresponding press release

¹³ 'EMPIRE AWAITS THE KING'S DECISION', *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 4 December 1936, p. 7.

¹⁴ 'BALDWIN'S THREAT', *The Age*, Melbourne, Vic., 4 December 1936, p. 13.

¹⁵ 'The King's choice', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 5 December 1936, p. 16.

¹⁶ 'THE KING'S DUTY', *The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, Qld., 4 December 1936, p. 14.

issued from Canberra. The *Argus*, for example, added fuel to the fire on 5 December, revealing from cabled reports that Savage, Hertzog, Mackenzie King and Lyons had:

made representations in the strongest terms about the concern felt overseas relative to the circumstantial reports of the King's proposal. It is said the situation that has been created is now being handled by five men – Mr. Baldwin and the Prime Ministers of the four Dominions.¹⁷

Also quoting from a British newspaper, the Launceston *Examiner* offered further detail, revealing that in England it was 'no longer concealed that the Dominions have conveyed to the Government that marriage would be deeply deplored, and might even prejudice Imperial connections.'¹⁸ By the end of the weekend, the first indignant demands for an explanation from Lyons began to appear. 'Who gave Mr Lyons permission to cable to Prime Minister Baldwin that Australia is opposed to the marriage of the King and Mrs Simpson?' demanded 'Perth Professional Man' of the more liberal *Sunday Times*, concluding that 'of all the impertinence the world has ever witnessed this surely ranks first.'¹⁹

In Canberra, Lyons was able for the first time to break the stalemate. Having the day before successfully avoiding questioning and adjourned both Houses for the extended summer recess, that morning he took the extraordinary step of recalling Parliament to Canberra. This abrupt turn was generated by receipt of advice from Baldwin that finally allowed him to be able to move from the impasse. That day, the King had informed Baldwin privately that he intended to abdicate, although final confirmation still remained days away. The 'course of events makes it necessary to prepare without delay for voluntary abdication', Baldwin wrote to the Dominion prime ministers, adding that the 'whole position' could now be communicated to their

¹⁷ 'CRISIS IN BRITAIN BECOMES EASIER', *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 5 December 1936, p. 17.

¹⁸ 'CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS', *Examiner*, Launceston, Tas., 5 December 1936, p. 8.

¹⁹ 'Mr. Lyons Was High-Handed', *Sunday Times*, Perth, W.A., 6 December 1936, p. 3.

respective Cabinets within the bounds of ‘absolute necessity for continued secrecy.’²⁰

Bruce in London also indicated that time was short, cabling that ‘[p]resent indications are King will announce abdication on Monday but there is no certainty.’²¹

Although some had stayed in Canberra, many MPs and Senators were reaching the end of the long journey home to their respective states and were displeased by this turn of events. Some members had their suspicions as to the purpose. As ALP member Francis Baker later commented, they had gathered some ‘meagre information’ from the newspapers including that Baldwin had been in consultation with the Dominion prime ministers on the matter of the King’s marriage.²² Nationalist Harold Holt also remarked that ‘we knew, in our own minds, that there was a distinct possibility’ that members had been recalled in order pass legislation relating to the abdication.²³ Lyons’ inner retinue had to turn around immediately in the hope of arriving in time for a Cabinet meeting scheduled for Tuesday morning, 8 December.²⁴ For everyone else, an extraordinary meeting of Parliament was scheduled for the following day, 9 December.

By this point, the conclusion of the matter seemed imminent. Exercising his right of direct communication with the monarch for the first time, Lyons sent Edward a direct telegram on the evening of 5 December that, while ostensibly asking the King to reconsider, unequivocally reiterated his position favouring abdication over any sort of marriage. Drawing on the opinion expressed by Lord Hartington, he described the ‘disturbed state of public opinion’ in Australia that followed the press reporting. ‘The clear opinion of my government the Commonwealth Parliament and Australian people is unfavourable to such a marriage’, he confirmed.²⁵ By this stage, opinion among the

²⁰ NAA, CP4/10, 2. Telegram to Dominion prime ministers from Baldwin, 4 December 1936.

²¹ NAA, CP4/10, 1. Telegram to Lyons from Bruce, 5 December 1936.

²² Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 11 December 1936, p. 2918.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 2916.

²⁴ ‘CABINET AWAITS KING’S DECISION’, *The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, Qld., 7 December 1936, p. 12.

²⁵ NAA, CP4/10, 2. Telegram to King’s Private Secretary from Lyons, 5 December 1936.

other Dominion prime ministers had consolidated. The Canadian and South African governments sent similar messages, although New Zealand still hoped for an outcome where the King could both marry and retain the throne, but nonetheless accepted the British government's position.²⁶ To the King, it would have appeared that there was no support for him in the Dominions. This was untrue. **Image 29**

The Australian public respond

By now, the response of the Australian public can be more clearly discerned in the written record. Debate over Edward's choice of a wife reveals a deep divide in Australian attitudes towards the relationship between private life and public responsibility. In the earliest stages, and despite the wails of the conservative press, it appears that many Australians held a more moderate view of the King's dilemma when compared to Baldwin's desire to bring the matter to a close as quickly as possible. Many held out hope for a compromise whereby the King remained on the throne, even if at the expense of his relationship. This reflects the view that his particular qualities of leadership were needed at the helm of the Empire during such uncertain times. If Edward needed further time to consider his decision fully, then so be it. This particular strand of opinion was championed by Billy Hughes, then the Minister for Repatriation and Health. The former prime minister entered the fray with an eloquent speech given to journalists in Sydney on 6 December and reproduced in papers of all affiliations across the country the following day. To some Australians, Hughes' passionate oratory came as a 'refreshing "steadier"', all the more welcome in contrast to the unrelenting silence of all other government officials, including the Opposition, and the increasingly vocal

²⁶ Williams, *The People's King*, pp. 201-02.

bewilderment of the press, who was relying mainly on reprinting information sourced from their overseas correspondents and agencies.²⁷

By this point, Hughes had known the King personally for almost two decades. Although doubtless a mutually exasperating relationship, both shared a common understanding of the monarch's popularity as critical to Australia's continued imperial prowess. As in wartime, Hughes conceptualised appropriate masculine behaviour as putting duty above familial and romantic attachments for the greater good of the nation. Accordingly, he believed that the King was duty-bound to give up his relationship with Wallis. Furthermore he was confident that Edward would do this, if given time to come to the right decision. Despite sympathising with the 'struggle between the King and the man', Hughes nonetheless believed Edward's duty to his people and his 'great love for the woman' were starkly opposed. He saw only a choice between 'all that love means, with its infinite peace and assuagement and the stern path of duty and national responsibility.' The loss of Wallis, he felt, was justified in light of the threat to the institution of monarchy and, by extension, the Empire at large. Hughes perceived that:

Theirs is the sacrifice, theirs the decision, but if from this fiery ordeal of purifying passion they come victorious over self, and stand sublime in sacrifice, they may light such a torch, of selflessness and devotion to the highest call-of duty as will light the feet of men in the struggle of life, and dispel the menacing clouds of strife and selfishness that now beset the world.²⁸

Echoing evocative sentiments expressed in Britain by Churchill, Hughes called for a period of reflection for the King to react thoughtfully to this unprecedented situation.²⁹ He superlatively illustrated the redemptive power of such a gesture by so

²⁷ NLA, MS 1538/1/1281. Letter to Hughes from L. Hurley, 8 December 1936.

²⁸ 'MR. HUGHES APPEALS FOR QUIET REFLECTION', *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, S.A., 7 December 1936, p. 24.

²⁹ In Britain, Mort has identified a contemporary change from the restraint and self-control characteristic of Victorian politicians to self-expression and public sentiment, as demonstrated by Churchill during the abdication. Mort, 'Love in a Cold Climate', p. 30.

revered a public figure, proclaiming that Edward's popularity and influence could only increase, perceiving that:

in his gallant chivalry and devotion to his people, in his deep and tender sympathy for all who are poor or are heavily laden, in his intolerance of all hypocrisies and veneers and swift discernment of false and true ... he has brought to our peoples a spiritual inspiration and example that can carry us triumphantly through all the perils and darkness of our times. In the sacrifice we beseech of him he would reach transcendent heights.³⁰

Lyons, eager to finalise matters without inflaming public opinion, reacted to the unsanctioned outburst with 'sharpest annoyance' and vowed to ask for Hughes' resignation when matters were settled.³¹ But it was too late: Hughes' provocative words prompted a welter of debate from all quarters, and attracted a significant following. Far from a relatively minor difference of opinion between the King and his government, Hughes' particular sentimental linguistic appeal had firmly cast the dilemma as a romantic drama with grave human repercussions. Mr. F.E. Taylor of George Town, Tasmania, described the address as the most apt expression 'of what many of us are feeling.'³² 'Never have I worshipped you more or loved you better than when I read your exquisite appeal to our beloved King', wrote D. Hobban of Grafton, New South Wales.³³ 'You have made everyone who read it, see it from all angles, in a fair, honourable, and sympathetic way', agreed Edith Taylor, the wife of a Sydney returned soldier.³⁴

Despite the way his attitude to Australia's obligations to the Empire had divided Australia in the past, in this situation Hughes' stance on Edward's dedication to his

³⁰ 'MR. HUGHES APPEALS FOR QUIET REFLECTION', *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, S.A., 7 December 1936, p. 24.

³¹ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 7 December 1936.

³² NLA, MS 1538/1/1277. Letter to Hughes from Taylor, 8 December 1936.

³³ NLA, MS 1538/1/1278. Letter to Hughes from [?]Hobban, 8 December 1936.

³⁴ NLA, MS 1538/1/1286. Letter to Hughes from Taylor, 9 December 1936.

official duties resonated especially with some sections of the returned servicemen population. As Mrs. M. Killeen of Vacluse, New South Wales, explained:

You, Mr. Hughes, who have always been the mouthpiece of the men of the AIF and often represented the opinions and feelings of the dependents of these men, have the keen support of many, many people in your appeal to the King to make his small sacrifice for the Empire.³⁵

Widely quoted across the nation because he was the only Minister to comment publicly, Hughes swiftly acquired the status of spokesman for the Australian popular voice, or at least a liberal alternative to that of Lyons. The labourite Brisbane *Worker*, for example, enthused that Hughes' interjection would 'knock the ground from under Baldwin' by offering an alternative to Lyons' statement on Australia's attitude, 'for both men are known in London: Lyons as a blob and Hughes as a live force.'³⁶ Hughes' statement offered some hope that the King could be persuaded to remain on the throne and that abdication, as seemingly insisted on by Baldwin and the Dominion prime ministers, would not eventuate. As Rita Esler of Carnegie, Victoria, wrote, 'Australians love King Edward and dread abdication ... time may offer a solution of the situation.'³⁷ In Tasmania, the Labor Premier Albert Ogilvie recorded that there was a 'substantial body of responsible public opinion here which regards abdication ... as a major disaster to the nation, with possible consequences beyond anyone's power to foresee.'³⁸ Abdication, agreed Dan O'Brien of Woodford, Queensland, would 'commence [the] disintegration of [the] monarchial [sic] empire.'³⁹

Some even hoped that Hughes could exert some influence over the King's capacity for reason. 'He may listen to you thereby avoiding catastrophe' urged one

³⁵ NLA, MS 1538/1/1279. Letter to Hughes from Killeen, 8 December 1936.

³⁶ 'BRITISH CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS', *Worker*, Brisbane, Qld., 8 December 1936, p. 6.

³⁷ NLA, MS 1538/1/1272. Telegram to Hughes from Esler, 7 December 1936.

³⁸ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Telegram to Lyons from Ogilvie, 8 December 1936.

³⁹ NLA, MS 1538/1/1266. Telegram to Hughes from O'Brien, undated.

man.⁴⁰ Hughes' supporters believed that the King ought to know the views of Australians despite their distance, further illustrating the consternation felt in some quarters that Lyons had spoken on their behalf in favour of the finality of abdication. R.L. Langford of Glen Osmond, South Australia, wrote to Hughes urging that the full text be cabled to London, for 'it might be the determining factor in the solution of this far-reaching matter.'⁴¹ Henry Allen of Melbourne offered to 'gladly pay' for the cost of the telegram if someone could persuade the King to read a copy of the text.⁴²

Sentiments such as this reveal the evident frustration some Australians felt at having no obvious means to convey their opinion concerning Lyons' apparent presumption. In one instance, *Smith's Weekly* reported the attempts of another unnamed contemporary publication that endeavoured to test the waters with a cut-out voting coupon gauging whether Edward 'should or should not hold to his avowed purpose.'⁴³ In Melbourne, a returned soldier took to a public space to voice his dissatisfaction with Baldwin's ultimatum, enticing the orchestra in a Melbourne cinema to an impromptu rendition of 'God Save the King', inciting a 'prolonged clamour' from the other patrons and generating 'a fervour seldom heard in an amusement house.'⁴⁴

Others wrote to their MP, unaware that almost all parliamentarians were similarly uniformed. In Canberra, the Post Office had to acquire extra staff to deal with the flood of telegrams that coincided with the federal members' return for the extraordinary meeting of Parliament scheduled for 9 December.⁴⁵ According to the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 90 per cent of those received

⁴⁰ NLA, MS 1538/1/1269. Telegram to Hughes from H. Allen, 7 December 1936.

⁴¹ NLA, MS 1538/1/1275. Letter to Hughes from Langford, 7 December 1936.

⁴² NLA, MS 1538/1/1269. Letter to Hughes from Allen, 8 December 1936.

⁴³ Referred to in 'How "The Times" did Mr. Baldwin's job', *Smith's Weekly*, Sydney, N.S.W., 19 December 1936, p. 14.

⁴⁴ 'SYMPATHY FOR KING', *Advocate*, Burnie, Tas., 8 December 1936, p. 1.

⁴⁵ 'MANY TELEGRAMS', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* N.S.W., 10 December 1936, p. 11.

‘protested against any attempt to induce King Edward to abdicate.’⁴⁶ Although the basis for the newspaper’s insider knowledge is unknown, and its labour sympathies may have induced the editor to champion this strand of public opinion in particular, this does hint at the existence of a deep wellspring of Australian public opinion that, like Hughes, preferred the considered negotiation of a compromise over an abrupt abdication. This was manifested as a widespread depth of outrage at the perception that the King’s governments had collectively forced the issue. Roland Perdriau of Horseshoe Creek, New South Wales, for example, wrote directly to Lyons of his deep resentment as to the ‘pressure’ regarding the ‘marriage question.’⁴⁷ Others were most incensed that no public consultation had taken place. ‘[I] demand [that] you consult people before irrevocable action [is] taken’, wrote J.J. Thompson of Cairns, Queensland, to Lyons.⁴⁸ ‘This is a people’s issue’, the South Australian ‘United Democrats Nonparty’ agreed.⁴⁹ In a letter to the *Sunday Times*, ‘Perth Professional Man’ avowed that:

We, the people of Australia, have a right to be consulted about this business ... before the final word is said ... it never has been a case for a few people to settle; it was and is a matter to be settled by the people.⁵⁰

Others, such as the pro-financial reform Queensland Douglas Social Credit Party, explicitly suggested a formal referendum was needed.⁵¹ ‘Loyal subjects in Canberra are not aware that any attempt has been made to assess the public opinion of the Commonwealth of Australia in the matter of your marriage’, agreed Verity Fitzhardinge and Mabel Tapp of Canberra in a letter intended for the King. This, the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ NAA, A461, I396/1/2. Letter to Perdriau from F. Strahan, 7 December 1936.

⁴⁸ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Telegram to Lyons from Thompson, 9 December 1936.

⁴⁹ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Telegram to Lyons from United Democrats Nonparty, undated.

⁵⁰ ‘Mr. Lyons Was High-Handed’, *Sunday Times*, Perth, W.A., 6 December 1936, p. 3.

⁵¹ NLA, MS 1538/1/1267. Telegram to Hughes from the Douglas Social Credit Association of Queensland, [?]7 December 1936.

writers argued, ‘could only be done by a referendum.’⁵² Like R.L Langford and Henry Allen, these women wanted to exercise their right of direct communication with the King, hoping to impress upon him the diversity of Australian public opinion beyond what was reported to have passed between the prime ministers. Their attempt to send their message to Edward via the Governor-General was, however, unwise. ‘His Excellency does not propose to forward such a message to the King which is only signed by two ladies’, Leighton Bracegirdle, Hore-Ruthven’s Military and Official Secretary, told Frank Strahan, Lyons’ Secretary.⁵³

In contrast, the views of ‘Nationalist’, published in the Hobart *Mercury*, fared somewhat better, or at least stood a greater chance of being read by more people. Like many others, the writer protested that:

[T]he Lyons government may not approve the King’s choice, but time should be given for the people to speak for themselves in this important matter ... if [they] were allowed to vote on this matter, a very different message would be sent to Mr. Baldwin.⁵⁴

In the same edition, R.A. Clive agreed that the prime minister had ‘committed Australia and Australians as a whole to a policy of opposition to their Sovereign’ and that steps ought to be taken to ‘voice the dissatisfaction that must exist at this arbitrary action.’⁵⁵ This commentary reveals the strength of Australians’ conviction that the relationship between the King and his people was direct and profound and should not be subject to interference from the government.

If, in the first instance, a significant proportion of the public followed Hughes’ view, that the King was duty-bound to abandon his relationship plans due to his

⁵² NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Hore-Ruthven from Fitzhardinge and Tapp, 6 December 1936.

⁵³ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Strahan from Bracegirdle, 7 December 1936. It is certain that many Australians would have attempted to communicate directly with the King, possibly either by writing to one of his English addresses or requesting that the Australian Governor-General forward on a letter.

⁵⁴ ‘LETTERS TO THE EDITOR’, *The Mercury*, Hobart, Tas., 8 December 1936, p. 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

particular qualities suitable for steering the Empire through the dark times ahead, another more liberal strand of opinion began to emerge as the week passed. Like Hughes, this group considered abdication to be the last resort in favour of the King remaining on the throne, but differed in that they were willing to consider, even embrace, the idea of Wallis as his future wife as another solution to the problem. These Australians viewed his personal, rather than leadership, qualities as irreplaceable. 'We in common with many others are in accordance with your desire to marry the woman you love rather than lose you', wrote Fitzhardinge and Tapp in their letter intended for their 'beloved' King.⁵⁶

Others expressed sympathy and support for Edward's freedom to love whomever he wished, seeing no obvious reason to dislike his intended wife other than moral prejudice. 'Cavalier' of Perth, who agreed that Wallis' only fault was that 'like you and me she loves King Edward', wrote that 'the dilemma is none of our choosing, but we must declare ourselves, either for the young King or for the Old Pretenders.'⁵⁷ This last comment hints at the existence of a critical difference in Australian opinion towards the obligations of citizenship and private happiness. As first mentioned in chapter 1, this response points to the advent of sexual modernity in some more liberal and youthful sections of the population.

Alongside the right of the individual to pursue private concerns, a more enlightened response to the increasing instances of divorce can be discerned in some more permissive elements of inter-war Australian society within this pantheon of cultural changes. 'What right have we to sneer at divorced persons?' asked Perth Professional Man' of the *Sunday Times*, pointing out that Wallis had simply availed herself of the legalisation available to all persons whether innocent or wronged. He

⁵⁶ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Hore-Ruthven from Fitzhardinge and Tapp, 6 December 1936.

⁵⁷ 'GENTLEMEN, THE KING!', *The Daily News*, Perth, W.A., 9 December 1936, p. 3.

claimed a ‘genuine feeling of pleasure that King Edward has at last found someone whom he can love.’⁵⁸ ‘Rookwood’, also of Perth, saw Edward’s moral integrity as manifest in his chivalrous insistence on marrying Wallis, going so far as to credit the King as almost ‘too honourable’, given his desire for a legal union with the promise of lifelong companionship rather than simply keeping her as his lover.⁵⁹

Other sympathetic observers felt that human feelings had no relevance to national and imperial affairs, even that the King’s private happiness could only enhance his capacity to perform his duty. In a Sydney sermon, Baptist minister the Rev. Thomas Ruth, for example, spoke of Edward as ‘one of the most lonely men alive’, offering sympathy ‘in the sore strain put upon his rare qualities of sovereignty.’⁶⁰ Similarly, Mr. A.J. Nadebaum of Perth trusted that the King’s decision was the right one. ‘King Edward has always shown that he wants what is best for everybody, and I have not the slightest doubt that he now proposes to marry Mrs. Simpson believing that action on his part to be best for everybody’, he wrote to the *Daily News*.⁶¹ Unlike those who believed Edward ought to give up his relationship with Wallis, commentators such as Nadebaum perceived modern masculine qualities as entailing the pursuit of private happiness and considered companionable romantic love as a stabilising force.

Also discernible in the public response was the widely held perception that Edward had been unfairly treated, and deserved a chance to assert himself. Some Australians took action. On 7 December, for example, 2,000 people gathered in Sydney’s Domain, to demonstrate their stance ‘behind our King in his hour of trial.’ One speaker, Pauline Budge, hailed Edward as ‘the most democratic sovereign ever to sit on the throne’, adding with spirit that ‘we are certainly not going to take this lying

⁵⁸ ‘Mr. Lyons Was High-Handed’, *Sunday Times*, Perth, W.A., 6 December 1936, p. 3.

⁵⁹ ‘What his subjects think about it all’, *The Daily News* Perth, W.A., 9 December 1936, p. 4.

⁶⁰ ‘Constitutional Crisis’, *The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, N.S.W., 8 December 1936, p. 2.

⁶¹ ‘What his subjects think about it all’, *The Daily News* Perth, W.A., 9 December 1936, p. 4.

down.’⁶² As Whiskard observed in a telegram to the Dominions Office, perceptions of the King’s democratic ideals, and the view that the episode had arisen due to the desire of Baldwin and the conservative Establishment to remove him from the throne gave the debate a certain intensity in the labour movement, as reflected particularly by the *Sydney Labour Daily*.⁶³ The principle at stake, that one man should be forcibly removed from office by another, was the critical objection. Working and socialist-leaning Australians deplored the patent fact that a ‘democratic’ King was being overthrown in an undemocratic fashion. ‘Who is this man Baldwin, who can say in effect to the Empire’s King, “Do as I tell you, or get off that throne”’?, demanded Boote in *The Australian Worker*. ‘Have they a Dictator over there?’⁶⁴ **Image 30**

These sympathetic and supportive strands of public opinion emerged most strongly for Williams in her study of letters written by British and Dominion peoples to the King during this timeframe. This led her to the conclusion that the Prince’s widespread travels and friendly contact with ordinary people within the Dominions and colonies had ‘been met with appreciation and gratitude’, meaning that when his wish to marry for love became world news, ‘these ordinary people felt great sympathy.’⁶⁵

A close analysis of the Australian sources, however, indicate that, for the majority of the public, sympathy extended only so far. As the week drew to a close, the opinion of numerous Australians came to unwittingly correlate with that of Lyons, their reticent leader. As public and press commentary flourished across the nation, some gradually came to believe that the King could no longer recover his previous good standing and ought to abdicate. Contrary to the sympathetic views of those mentioned in the preceding pages, numerous Australians, as we shall see, could not countenance

⁶² ‘Constitutional Crisis’, *The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, N.S.W., 8 December 1936, p. 2.

⁶³ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 8 December 1936.

⁶⁴ ‘Mr Baldwin Turns Dictator’, *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 9 December 1936, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Williams, *The People’s King*, p. 208.

Wallis as either wife or Queen. Others perceived the King's insistence on private love as an affront to the monarchy and insignificant in the face of danger in Europe. As Schwartzbach has remarked, the hackneyed sexual double standard of the corruptive influence of a woman over a supposedly pure man has been oft-cited in narratives of royal couples, including Caesar and Cleopatra, Justinian and Theodora and even Edward's relatives, the murdered Nicholas and Alexandra.⁶⁶

In this light, it is likely that Wallis never stood much chance of being accepted by the Australian public. An American diplomat posted in Canberra, for example, observed at the time that 'the Australian outlook on life is distinctly middle-class, and in morals is distinctly Victorian.'⁶⁷ While certainly a more permissive attitude to morality was flourishing in some sections of Australian society, in many quarters the royal family were still expected to uphold the conservative domestic values of King George V. It is unsurprising, therefore, that so much of the Australian opposition to the marriage, and therefore support of abdication, took the form of misogynistic slights to Wallis' perceived character and nationality. Although earlier in the week many Australians had written in terms of their 'love' for the King and expressed anxieties concerning the demise of this love, his perceived disregard for his duty soon began to fatally sour the relationship.

For many, Wallis' divorce meant she would never be suitable as the King's wife, and was possibly incapable of further love herself. 'The fact that the King has taken upon himself the privilege of marrying a woman with two divorces already is, I think, a great humiliation to the whole Empire', Mannix wrote from Melbourne on 8 December.⁶⁸ Some could not see Wallis as an individual who genuinely loved the King,

⁶⁶ Schwartzbach, 'Love, Marriage and Divorce', p. 151.

⁶⁷ Unknown diplomat, quoted in despatch sent to Washington from the American mission in Canberra, 8 December 1936 in Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 306.

⁶⁸ 'Constitutional Crisis', *The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, N.S.W., 8 December 1936, p. 2.

concluding that she was a shrewd sycophant who had somehow ensnared him. Nellie Davies wrote ‘from the suburbs’ to thank Hughes for what she perceived as his ‘efforts in trying to strangle the serpent which is trying to slime its ways around the English throne. We do not want this twice married American as Queen of England ... We have lost a great deal of respect for our beloved King.’⁶⁹ The British race could not ‘tolerate a prostitute on the greatest throne in the world’ another writer informed Lyons.⁷⁰ Even though at the time of the royal tour and, to a lesser degree, up until his accession, Australians had been prepared to permit Edward his bachelor freedom as a manifestation of his modernity, perceptions of Wallis in 1936 reveal that the monarch was in reality subject to impossibly high moral standards from his people.

The incident also revealed the power that masculine ideals first established in wartime still wielded over Australian society of 1936. Some Australians equated Edward’s insistence on personal happiness as an affront to Australia’s selfless dedication to Britain’s aid during wartime. In a telegram to Lyons, Brisbane clergyman David Garland, for example, warned ‘remember them’, pointing to the sacrifice of Australian soldiers who ‘laid down their lives to ensure the throne.’⁷¹ Nellie Davies felt the King’s behaviour had irreparably damaged his previous good standing as a model for loyal masculinity. ‘Many men here say most unpleasant things regarding the King’, she told Hughes, ‘they say he is not doing his duty, and if war comes he will expect us to go and do ours.’⁷² Mrs Killeen offered more detail from this perspective, affirming that:

the woman of the Empire did not hesitate to sacrifice their men – mothers, wives and sweethearts gave their husbands, sons and lovers. Today the great majority of these women, after twenty years, are lonely and not rich in worldly goods. Today the greatest King in the

⁶⁹ NLA, MS 1538/1/1283. Letter to Hughes from Davies, 8 December 1936.

⁷⁰ NLA, MS 4851. Letter to Lyons from unknown correspondent, undated, likely 2 December 1936.

⁷¹ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Telegram to Lyons from Garland, 7 December 1936.

⁷² NLA, MS 1538/1/1283. Letter to Hughes from Davies, 8 December 1936.

world, the best-loved King in this world, hesitates to sacrifice his love for one woman who has already failed to make two other men happy in married life. The King has impinged on the finer and nobler feelings of his subjects in his hesitation.⁷³

As these perspectives show, such anxieties emerge all the more sharply in light of the precarious state of peace in Europe at the time and the growing possibility of another war. This commentary also demonstrates how the wartime and post-war notions of ideal masculinity as comprising self-sacrifice for the nation and Empire, as first discussed in chapter 1, were all the more firmly embedded in Australia society of 1936. Lucas De Garis of Geelong, Victoria, for example, believed that the King's 'individual responsibility for conscientious scruple' would prove 'the only defence against dictatorship and exploit.'⁷⁴

It was already too late. As Nellie Davies was quick to point out, 'an ideal King and Queen is [sic] standing in the background.'⁷⁵ The prospect of the Duke of York taking up the throne in favour of his brother was of course not a new prospect, having been discussed in official circles and in the Australian press since the late 1920s. It seems that, even in the uncertain week or so leading up to the official announcement of the abdication, Australians had all but lost faith in Edward's commitment to his leadership of the Empire. For the most part, minds were made up. 'Delay can only mean possible revolution', agreed another writer to Lyons. 'We prefer the Duke and Duchess. They stand for decent family life, for respect, for honour, and for safety and security of the Empire.'⁷⁶ In her diary, Melbourne artist Joan Kingsley-Strack noted approvingly that Albert would bring 'loyalty & love & a happy family to the throne & a great respect from his people.'⁷⁷ Ultimately, although there were some who profoundly disagreed,

⁷³ NLA, MS 1538/1/1279. Letter to Hughes from Killeen, 8 December 1936.

⁷⁴ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Lyons from De Garis, 7 December 1936.

⁷⁵ NLA, MS 1538/1/1283. Letter to Hughes from Davies, 8 December 1936.

⁷⁶ NLA, MS 4851. Letter to Lyons from unknown correspondent, undated, likely 2 December 1936.

⁷⁷ NLA, MS 9551, Joan Kingsley-Strack papers and diaries. Entry for 10 December 1936.

Lyons' at first seemingly uninformed assessment of the opinion of the Australian people's loss of respect towards the King and his apparent neglect of his inherited duties over his private love was proved largely correct.

This knowledge would likely have been cold comfort to the prime minister as he struggled with the more immediate problem of managing the affair within Parliament. While public and press opinion outside increased in stridency, Lyons held a Cabinet meeting in Canberra on the morning of 7 December. Ministers waited all day for the news from London without which their own discussions could not begin. The British government's planned Cabinet meeting was scheduled for that day in London, or mid-evening in Australia. If the Minutes are to be believed, the Lyons government apparently wiled away the time in desultory discussions ranging from the awarding of a Nobel prize to Stanley Bruce, to the import of horses, and the provision of milk for children.⁷⁸ However, it is worth recalling that on 4 December Lyons had received Baldwin's permission to disclose the details, such as they were, to his Cabinet. Although the Minutes for this meeting, as well as the two that took place over the following days, do not record any official discussion of the issues at stake, anecdotal sources suggest instead that some energetic conversation took place nonetheless. Enid Lyons claims that Cabinet was 'unanimous in support of the views Joe had proffered' on the matter.⁷⁹

A livelier view is put forward by Sheila Lochhead, Malcolm MacDonald's sister, who entertained Menzies as a dinner guest in England the following year. This is a second-hand account, but it does confirm the already-articulated battleground demarcated by Hughes in opposition to Lyons and his colleagues. Behind Cabinet's

⁷⁸ NAA, A2694, 312. Minutes of Cabinet meeting, 7 December 1936,

⁷⁹ Lyons, *So we take comfort*, p. 251.

closed doors Hughes apparently remained supportive of the King remaining on the throne. In her diary, Lochhead evokes a confrontation where:

Hughes [was] inclined to make [a] King's Party. Sentimentalised situation ... In Cabinet, when affair was becoming tediously dragged out, [Hughes] suggested after much reference to his intimacy with the Sovereign, that Australia should propose further fortnight's postponement of decision. Menzies followed quickly [saying] that, if affair was not settled that evening, Australia should suggest the use of force in removing the King.⁸⁰

The rest of the day passed without any communication from London, although the Launceston *Examiner* of the same day stated its conviction, drawing on British press reports, that the Baldwin government would confirm an abdication within days.⁸¹ Despite this, Lyons held a brief press conference reiterating that he had no statement to make, and denied the rumour that his government had initiated the opposition to the proposed marriage.⁸² Clearly anticipating the outcome, he also sent a secret telegram to the state Premiers that simply requested their comments on proposed legislation allowing for the appointment of a new monarch 'in the deplorable event' of abdication.⁸³ Although this was the states' first official notification, it merely served to convey that abdication was an inevitable outcome.

The response was mostly accepting. South Australian Premier and Liberal Union Party member Richard Butler hoped to avoid 'acrimonious debate.'⁸⁴ Victorian Premier and Country Party supporter Albert Dunstan was more concerned about the possible dissolution of the Governor's office and that of the Governor-General.⁸⁵ The most

⁸⁰ Quoted in Clyde Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald: Bringing an End to Empire* (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), p. 454.

⁸¹ 'Mr. Baldwin Reported to Have Adopted Formula Which May Ease Constitutional Position', *Examiner*, Launceston, Tas., 7 December 1936, p. 7.

⁸² 'EXPECTED TO-DAY', *The Northern Miner*, Charters Towers, Qld., 7 December 1936, p. 2.

⁸³ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Telegram to state Premiers from Lyons, 7 December 1936.

⁸⁴ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Telegram to Lyons from Butler, 8 December 1936.

⁸⁵ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Telegram to Lyons from Dunstan, 7 December 1936.

vehement response came from Tasmanian Albert Ogilvie, an old foe of Lyons.⁸⁶ ‘We are completely without information of an authoritative character ... your position would be strengthened by the support of the states, which in our case at any rate cannot be given merely on press reports’ he fumed.⁸⁷ Ogilvie’s outrage led him to exercise his right of direct communication with the King, assuring him that ‘the loyalty of the people of this State remains unshaken’ and ‘we pray that difficulties now existing will speedily be solved.’⁸⁸ In Canberra, no further news was received that night from London, despite the swift installation of a new radio receiving BBC broadcasts in the Cabinet room.⁸⁹ Static marred the reception, meaning Lyons remained reliant on information conveyed by incoming secret telegrams, which had to be first laboriously decoded at the High Commission before the information could be passed on to Provisional Parliament House.⁹⁰

Political tensions increase

By 8 December, the tide of popular support and sympathy for the King’s predicament had largely receded: it now seemed he had to go, and quickly. In Melbourne, Lord Hartington summarised that Edward’s capacity to command respect had vanished, lamenting to the Dominions Office that the throne’s prestige would be ‘gravely compromised’, save for the speedy accession of the Duke of York.⁹¹ Such sentiments reflect that Australian public opinion had come to espouse Lyons’ earliest untested

⁸⁶ For further discussion of the rift between Lyons and Ogilvie, see Henderson, *Joseph Lyons*, p. 178-79.

⁸⁷ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Telegram to Lyons from Ogilvie, 8 December 1936.

⁸⁸ TNA, CAB 127/156. Telegram to UK Cabinet Office from Ogilvie, undated, likely 8 December 1936.

⁸⁹ ‘HUGHES’S STATEMENT RESENTED’, *Northern Star*, Lismore, N.S.W., 8 December 1936, p. 9.

⁹⁰ ‘THREE SESSIONS OF FEDERAL CABINET’, *Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, Qld., 8 December 1936, p. 7.

⁹¹ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 8 December 1936.

prediction. The editorial in that day's *Argus* newspaper vouchsafed for the integrity of both the Lyons and Baldwin governments, and their understanding of the solidarity of imperial relationships as 'something more important than the personal qualities of the King as they have hitherto manifested themselves with such pleasing effect on the people.' Perceiving the predicted upheaval in the direst terms, it pondered:

[H]ow far the prestige of the Throne and of the Empire has been impaired by the calamitous events ... That some damage will have to be repaired can scarcely be doubted ... The potentialities of the struggle which might be precipitated are appalling to contemplate. The sooner the melancholy episode is brought to an end the better for the peace and good government of the Empire.⁹²

Unfortunately for Lyons, the end was nowhere in sight. He held another fruitless Cabinet meeting on 8 December. Bruce wrote from London to dissuade the prime minister from making any further statement to the press but at the same time encouraged him, when it came, to 'express your complete agreement with Baldwin's statement.' He also warned that the British press viewed the sudden recall of the Australian Parliament as suspicious.⁹³ That day's *Adelaide Advertiser* had already reported the musings of a British newspaper over the lack of an apparent reason for Lyons to recall Parliament, suggesting that the Dominions were busy mulling over the terms of the legislation altering the laws of succession.⁹⁴ Although Australia was undeniably waiting in readiness to review the legislation, Lyons could do nothing. As he waited, Baldwin met with the King that evening for a final discussion followed by an evening dinner.⁹⁵ In the meantime, another avenue of compromise sudden emerged when Wallis made a statement in the press offering to give up the relationship, 'if such action would solve the problem.'⁹⁶ This display of willingness to compromise alarmed

⁹² 'Peril of delay', *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 8 December 1936, p. 8.

⁹³ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Lyons from Bruce, 8 December 1936.

⁹⁴ "'Nothing To Justify Calling Of Parliament'", *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, S.A., 8 December 1936, p. 23.

⁹⁵ Williams, *The People's King*, pp. 210-11.

⁹⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 211.

Baldwin, and worried by how this resurgence of the matter would reignite commentary in the Dominions, he sent a telegram insinuating that she was insincere, in an effort to hasten the closure of the matter once and for all.⁹⁷

Cabinet reconvened during the morning of 9 December. Although further unofficial discussion must have unfolded, Lyons made a point of recording that all explanations were to be saved for the extraordinary meeting of the House of Representatives scheduled for later that day.⁹⁸ Even by then, no confirmation had eventuated from London, and Lyons could do nothing but remain coy in the House later that morning, to the frustration of many of those present. After almost a week of national tension, it was expected that the prime minister would offer some words of reassurance and direction. Spectators crammed into the packed public galleries amid an atmosphere ‘the most expectant and dramatic since the early days of the Great War.’⁹⁹ In a speech that could have been nothing other than provoking to its listeners, Lyons opened with a limited account of communication to date, noting he did not wish to submit any business to Parliament that day, or reply to questions without notice. He offered the emergence of the unresolved yet ‘serious constitutional problem’ related to the King’s suggested marriage as necessitating the recall of Parliament, yet failed to expand further. ‘All I need say’ he stated, was that the Australian government ‘concur in the decision of the government of the United Kingdom not to legislate something in the nature of a morganatic marriage.’ He concluded that ‘a respectful and sympathetic silence in Parliament is the best contribution we can offer to a happy solution.’¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Whiskard from Dominions Office, 9 December 1936.

⁹⁸ NAA, A2694, 314. Minutes of Cabinet meeting, 9 December 1936.

⁹⁹ ‘MORGANATIC MARRIAGE’, *The West Australian*, Perth, W.A., 10 December 1936, p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 9 December 1936, p. 2884.

Not unexpectedly, this was not well-received. Lang Labor MP Jock Garden was the first to scoff ‘so you can sell him out in the meantime.’¹⁰¹ According to the *West Australian*, at this interjection the mood shifted to one of ‘bitterness’ and ultimately ‘scenes of angry disorder’ occurred before extended debate was stifled.¹⁰² Opposition Leader John Curtin also expressed dismay at this limited offering, calling for a full account of ‘the whole extent of the communications’ that had passed between Lyons and Baldwin.¹⁰³ As mentioned in chapter 2, from the earliest stages of his career, Curtin had taken a traditional labour stance towards the monarchy; that the institution was central to understandings of Empire and the advancement of Australian interests therein, but the individual less so. This underpins his objection to Baldwin’s now-redundant notion of passing special legislation to suit the King’s convenience, believing that no man’s wife should be denied his status and that, for the betterment of all, no one should exert their own will to the detriment of others. Accordingly, Curtin noted that Edward should be left ‘unfettered’ in his choice of a wife and not subject to coercion or influence from any government.¹⁰⁴

Some point of comparison can be made with the attitude of the British Labour Party. As leader Harry Snell said a few days later, ‘although the King might reign, the people, through Parliaments, must rule.’ Snell explained how Labour sought to emphasise ‘plans for the public good before its own political advantage’, and hence his party would not continue to rake over divisive issues. He simply hoped the new reign would take effect as speedily as possible.¹⁰⁵ Curtin’s final word was similarly-expressed. He concluded that:

¹⁰¹ This comment was not quoted in *Hansard*, but in ‘MORGANATIC MARRIAGE’, *The West Australian*, Perth, W.A., 10 December 1936, p. 19.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 9 December 1936, p. 2884.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2285.

¹⁰⁵ ‘ACCESSION OF KING GEORGE VI’, *Daily Mercury*, Mackay, Qld., 16 December 1936, p. 6.

the King must accept full responsibility for his conscience and to the Empire for the choice he makes. We shall not interfere with him, but we shall not inconvenience him, in the choosing of his wife. [The ALP] hopes that the present King will remain upon the throne of England.¹⁰⁶

Although Curtin's intention appears to have been to signal his outrage over the apparent conclusion of the matter without his input and the ALP's disinterest in the personal affairs of the monarch, the press seized upon his final sentence in particular. By appearing to back the King, the Opposition leader seemed to stake out a definitive stance against Lyons' subservient support of the British government's lead. This seemed to suggest to some the dangerous proposition that the Australian Opposition would remain loyal to the King, or by extension support the formation of a revolutionary King's party, even if he abdicated or the government was dissolved. Whiskard was so alarmed that he immediately contacted the Dominions Office, and he and Lyons set about prompting Curtin to further clarify his comments at the next public opportunity.¹⁰⁷

Whiskard's concerns were justified. Curtin's words were instantly controversial in Parliament and repeated widely in the press. As reported by the *West Australian*, the Lang Labor faction seized on the issue as an affront to the freedom of private life, becoming ever more rowdy as Speaker George Bell tried to close the debate. Rowland James reportedly gave a cry of 'God save the King!', while Jack Beasley shouted out that 'his thoughts for the masses are too democratic for you.'¹⁰⁸ Sympathetic members immediately sized up the potential of the situation for gaining a political advantage, with James shouting 'it will show little Teddy that he has some friends in Australia ...

¹⁰⁶ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 9 December 1936, pp. 2884-85.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, DO 121/34. Telegram to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 9 December 1936.

¹⁰⁸ 'MORGANATIC MARRIAGE', *The West Australian*, Perth, W.A., 10 December 1936, p. 19.

Test an election on this ... We will go to the country on this issue.’¹⁰⁹ After the passage of a motion that the House should meet again the following day and as parliamentarians began to file out of the chamber, some Opposition members sang ‘God Save the King’ *sotto voce*.¹¹⁰

As in 1920, the labour movement was able to easily overlook Edward’s aristocratic privilege in light of his apparent sympathy for the working-classes and as a friend of Australia’s ex-servicemen. In this regard, we can discern a parallel with the supportive attitudes of radical and working-class commentators towards the Queen Caroline affair of the 1820s, where King George IV’s attempts to divorce his estranged wife by an Act of Parliament served only to configure Caroline as a heroine for the oppressed.¹¹¹ In 1936, the ungenerous treatment of a ‘democratic’ monarch once again was perceived as a challenge to the notion of individual liberty and democracy itself. The press reports of the King’s visit to Wales the previous month had further revived earlier perceptions of his democratic leanings and honourable intentions for leadership. Having had no direct contact with him for sixteen years, Labor supporters and politicians were readily able to believe that ‘little Teddy’ remained the same idealistic and progressive young man.

News of the disturbance spread quickly. Within hours, Lyons’ inadequate explanation in Parliament fanned a wave of outrage across the country, provoking government and municipal organisations to make hasty attempts to censor public discussion. Unlike the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the role and function of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) had been prescribed by a 1932 Act of Parliament, and so the management was not at the time fully independent of ministerial

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in *ibid*.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in *ibid*.

¹¹¹ For further discussion, see Pickering, ‘A Grand Ossification’, p. 68.

direction.¹¹² Following the excitable claims of a Sydney radio station that ‘Mrs Simpson will make the finest Queen England has known’ and ‘it is certain that in this battle between autocracy and democracy the King is on the side of democracy’, the Director General of Postal Services took steps to prevent all stations from broadcasting ‘anything that might inflame public opinion’ on the issue.¹¹³

Public demonstrations were planned nonetheless, although whether Australians were motivated to protest about the suitability of the marriage, or as is more likely, the undemocratic role of the Australian government is not clear. In any case, groups were in some cases prevented from gathering in public places. In Melbourne, for example, the application of a conglomeration of liberal and radical citizens groups to use the Town Hall to ‘express loyalty to the King’ was rejected by municipal officials.¹¹⁴ In Sydney, the application of a Loyalty League was similarly rejected by the Town Hall Council.¹¹⁵ Evidently under great pressure to resolve the situation and curtail further public unrest, that evening Lyons sent one more desperate plea to Baldwin asking for any update.¹¹⁶

The abdication is officially confirmed

News of some sort was received in Canberra during the early hours of Thursday 10 December. The King’s desire to marry Wallis remained fixed, Baldwin wrote, and he had told him ‘informally that it is his desire to abdicate.’ To Lyons, he gave permission to pass this decision on to his Cabinet, but added ‘it is of course extremely important

¹¹² Quentin Dempster, ‘Australian Broadcasting Corporation’, in Bridget Griffen-Foley (ed.), *A companion to the Australian media*, (North Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014), p. 43.

¹¹³ ‘BROADCAST STIR’, *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 9 December 1936, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ ‘LOYALTY DEMONSTRATION’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 9 December 1936, p. 17. The applicants included the Democratic Liberal Organisation, the Council of Civil Liberties, the Douglas Social Credit movement and the Henry George League.

¹¹⁵ ‘TOWN HALL REFUSED’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 10 December 1936, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 9 December 1936.

that information should be kept secret.’ Although the abdication was now as good as confirmed, Lyons was still prevented from announcing the fact in Parliament.¹¹⁷ Baldwin had also sent a follow-up telegram to the Dominion prime ministers emphasising that in future debate in the House of Commons he intended to say that all Dominions were agreed on the proposed course of action, but that this did not amount to formal advice to abdicate and that the King’s decision was entirely ‘voluntary.’¹¹⁸ Baldwin was most anxious to cover up any appearance of collusion and asked the Dominions to join him in contacting the King directly to ask him to reconsider. Lyons immediately sent a personal message voicing his regret and asking that the King think over his decision and ‘continue to reign over us.’¹¹⁹

The prime minister was faced with further trouble that morning as a second extraordinary meeting of the House of Representatives was scheduled, one which, as before, would be attended by the nation’s press. The necessity for the British government to meet first to arrange the necessary legislation would mean that another working day would pass in Australia without Lyons being able to discuss the issue in the House of Representatives. Baldwin’s insistence on a simultaneous announcement across the Dominions forced Lyons into waiting to approve a *fait accompli*. The terms of the Bill were swiftly drafted, with some advice from Dominions but minimal input from Lyons. And so for the second consecutive day, disorderly scenes took place in the crowded and ‘despondent’ House of Representatives.¹²⁰ Amid shouts of ‘what sort of game is this?’ and ‘what, again?’ from the Opposition, Lyons made a brief statement almost identical to that of the previous day. ‘I have no further information to supply to honourable members’, he began, but ‘I expect to make a definitive statement to the

¹¹⁷ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Whiskard from Dominions Office, 10 December 1936.

¹¹⁸ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Whiskard from Dominions Office, 9 December 1936.

¹¹⁹ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Bracegirdle from Strahan, 10 December 1936

¹²⁰ ‘AWAITING THE NEWS’, *Kalgoorlie Miner, W.A.*, 11 December 1936, p. 5.

House when it meets tomorrow.’¹²¹ He offered no response to Curtin’s request that the full correspondence to date be revealed.

Expressing frustration at the second adjournment, the Opposition leader’s response made his dissatisfaction with the government abundantly clear. He retorted that:

[T]his Parliament is being silenced in regard to a matter of major importance to the Throne, to the succession to the Throne, and to Australia’s membership of the British Commonwealth of Nations ... I have to record that the Opposition is very much dissatisfied with the whole situation ... the Prime Minister owed it to the Parliament today, to perhaps a much greater extent than he did yesterday, to make known what advice he has tendered to His Majesty, and what His Majesty has had to say in response to that advice ... I object to the Parliament of this self-governing dominion - this Commonwealth of Australia - which, in every major matter that pertains to this Commonwealth, has the right directly to advise His Majesty, being reduced to the status of having merely to legalise whatever action may be taken in another parliament, and without reference to this Parliament ... We are not here to subordinate our relations to His Majesty the King to the relations that exist between the Government of the United Kingdom and the King. We are here, in the first place, to discharge the entire nature of the relations of this Commonwealth of Australia to the Throne.¹²²

It is not certain whether at this stage any communication had passed between Lyons and Curtin, as the former had intended, but as this speech proved, Curtin was steadfast in his conviction that the Australian government ought to have been able to communicate fully with the King. Curtin went on to powerfully reiterate his support of the King and his hope that he would ‘not relinquish the Throne.’¹²³ This impassioned speech sparked further tumultuous scenes and heckling. Curtin’s attempt to record a message for Edward expressing Australian Labor loyalty was technically disallowed by

¹²¹ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 10 December 1936, p. 2890; ‘Brief and Bitter Federal Meeting’, *News*, Adelaide, S.A., 10 December 1936, p. 13.

¹²² ‘CURTIN ATTACKS LYON’S MINISTRY’, *The Daily News*, Perth, W.A., 10 December 1936, p. 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

the Speaker at that stage of parliamentary proceedings, but was of little consequence.¹²⁴ As he would have been well aware, the text would be widely reproduced by the press nonetheless and made its way to London one way or another.

There was great agitation in both Houses of Parliament that day. When a similar move was made to adjourn the Senate, Collings expressed similar sentiments, protesting that the Opposition was:

[B]eing asked to remain here until the Government is prepared to tell the Parliament what a government somewhere else in the world has done, and then to ask it to say “ditto” ... Australia is no longer a colony, subject to control by Great Britain, but a nation with full rights, including the right of direct access to the King.¹²⁵

Collings demanded an explanation from Lyons as to the secret correspondence with Baldwin, stating ‘I claim my right to deal with every line and syllable of that statement... we, on this side, are prepared to allow the electors to judge on which side the balance of justice lies.’ ‘We shall not be in a position to come to an intelligent decision because we have not been placed in possession of any of the facts, let alone all of them’, he concluded.¹²⁶ These debates lend fresh insight into the constitutional transition that Australia was undergoing at the time, when left and liberal politicians advocated for a more independent role for the country within the imperial framework. In this case at least, the Opposition astutely perceived a fundamental subservience in the relationship between Britain and Australia, actively encouraged by the ruling decision-makers who occupied the seats of government, which served to subdue nationalist agency and legislative independence.

¹²⁴ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 10 December 1936, pp. 2890-91.

¹²⁵ Parliament of Australia, Senate, ‘Debates’, 10 December 1936, p. 2887.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Lyons had still made no statement by the time the abdication was decisively confirmed from Britain that afternoon.¹²⁷ While the Australian Parliament was in session, the King's intention to sign the Instrument of Abdication was officially and irrefutably confirmed in Britain. At this point, matters proceeded swiftly. Baldwin had requested a simultaneous announcement of his statement to the House of Commons to each of the Houses of Parliament across all the Dominions.¹²⁸ The difference in time zones posed major problems if Lyons were to be the first to communicate this message to the Australian people. When the abdication became public in Britain, it would be only a matter of hours before it was repeated in the early morning Australian press, and many hours before Parliament was scheduled to meet again mid-morning. The ABC immediately began to arrange for Lyons to broadcast this message to the nation by radio at the unenviable hour of 2am.

This was a complex undertaking. Involved from Lyons' office was his Private Secretary, Irvine Douglas, who described these as 'among the most exciting couple of hours' of his life.¹²⁹ The Director of Postal Services was hurriedly extracted from enjoying an official dinner in central Sydney, and 175 technical officers were summoned from their living rooms to attend the emergency. Despite the best of efforts, unfortunately some remote commercial stations had closed and 'their managers could not be found.' Nonetheless, in a major feat of organisation, the network of ABC radio stations stretching from Sydney to Perth and Rockhampton, as well as many commercial stations servicing every state across the continent, had all diverted their normal traffic in anticipation of Lyons' announcement.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ This is inferred from an understanding that Lyons was in Parliament when the telegram arrived, and this would in turn have taken some time to be decoded.

¹²⁸ NAA, A3522, 3/1. Telegram to Whiskard from Dominions Office, 10 December 1936.

¹²⁹ 'Irvine Douglas interviewed by Mel Pratt', 1972.

¹³⁰ 'HOW MESSAGE WAS HEARD', *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 12 December 1936, p. 20.

The public response in the metropolitan centres can be in some ways be compared to the royal tour of sixteen years before. Contemporary accounts of community members gathering together in anticipation of further news offer a discernible sense that this event was considered important in local historical narratives. Australian public opinion was diverse, and although in the early days had been mostly supportive of the King remaining on the throne with Wallis or without, it had by now moved to a desire for the matter to be finalised by an act of abdication. As such, it could be argued that those who left their homes across the country to participate in gatherings did so less out of concern for the King's future than that of their own and the leadership of the Empire. As the evening wore on, demonstrations took place in Melbourne. For example, a parade of 200 people organised by the Douglas Social Credit Union with placards and Union Jacks draped over their shoulders moved down Swanston Street and gathered near the Town Hall to sing 'God Save the King.'¹³¹ The end of a 'week of suspense' was illustrated by 'lighted houses and the blare of loudspeakers in the early hours', and told of metropolitan Melbourne's desire to know the King's decision. Not even the test series that had just commenced 'aroused so much interest among the people', commented the *Argus*.¹³²

In Sydney too, people milled around the streets and shops remained open until after midnight.¹³³ The *Sydney Morning Herald* described an 'atmosphere of strain, such has not been evident since the days of the war' through which small groups moved, talking in undertones 'almost as if they were conspirators.' 'We felt we could not stay indoors on a night like this', said one attendee. The usual 'chatter and laughter' of King's Cross was subdued, and 'as the hours grew smaller the tension grew greater.

¹³¹ 'Melbourne Demonstration', *Queensland Times*, Ipswich, Qld., 11 December 1936, p. 10.

¹³² 'HOW PEOPLE HEARD NEWS Sorrow Mingled With Relief', *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 12 December 1936, p. 20.

¹³³ 'THE NEWS IN SYDNEY', *The Scone Advocate*, Scone, N.S.W., 11 December 1936, p. 1.

Sydney waited with a hush and the crowds became even more alertly silent. Sooner or later it would be known either one way or another.’¹³⁴

In Canberra, at one point the all-important speech was threatened with cancellation as the King’s message failed to arrive. As Douglas recalled, his staff had prepared Lyons’ accompanying words, but there was no sign of Baldwin’s copy of the King’s message with less than an hour to go before the scheduled broadcast. Quick-thinking Douglas arranged for Lyons to ring Baldwin directly on the telephone and ask for the text to be read over the line. Minutes before Baldwin was due to appear in the House of Commons, his Private Secretary did so, and the text was simultaneously transcribed by two stenographers for distribution following the broadcast.¹³⁵ The final act of resorting to the telephone illustrates the desperation of the situation. Lyons had abided by Baldwin’s desire for absolute secrecy up to this point to his personal detriment, relying on the laborious process of encoding and decoding multiple telegrams in an effort to stay one step ahead of the news agencies. **Image 31**

Even if the telephone line had been tapped, Lyons’ staff worked faster and the broadcast went out at 2am on Friday 11 December, no doubt to the great relief of all concerned. ‘I regret to announce that I have received the King’s message of abdication’, the prime minister told the nation, ‘I feel sure that I am voicing the sentiments of every Australian when I express the most profound regret at the step which His Majesty King Edward has taken. We must all wish most heartily that he had acted other-wise.’ He recalled Edward’s personal charm, describing how ‘no member of the British Royal Family has ever made himself so well-known to his people’ and reminded listeners that:

[W]e in Australia remember his visit with the happiest thoughts. Our men who fought in the Great War knew him as a soldier; all Australians knew him also as a Royal Ambassador, as a friend, as a guest who had endeared himself to us, all while he was amongst us.

¹³⁴ ‘SYDNEY’S WAIT’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 11 December 1936, p. 15.

¹³⁵ . ‘Irvine Douglas interviewed by Mel Pratt’, 1972.

... Of his own will, he steps down from the throne of this mighty Empire, I say of his own will, because it was against the expressed wish of the representatives of his people that he took this course. The people of the Commonwealth of Australia, no less than those of any other part of the Empire, hoped to the last that he would remain their King, and when the Commonwealth Government urged him to reconsider his decision, I spoke I knew for every Australian.¹³⁶

Lyons moved on to extol the virtues of the new King, a man ‘whom we know and love’ and his wife ‘whom we also know and love.’ He recalled for listeners the beginnings of the relationship between Australians and the Duke of York during the visit of 1927, a connection that now took on new significance. He felt certain that ‘whatever regret we may feel at the abdication of King Edward’, he spoke for everyone ‘when I say that our new King, and his Queen, already strong in our affections, will continue to excite and attract the admiration and loyalty of the people of the Commonwealth.’¹³⁷ Although hastily drafted, Lyons’ speech struck the right tone between regretful acquiescence of the King’s irrefutable departure, before moving swiftly onto praise of the new monarch, apparently already occupying a place in Australian hearts. **Image 32**

The prime minister then moved to relate the now-often quoted message from the King commencing: ‘After long and anxious consideration I have determined to renounce the Throne.’ As mentioned in the previous pages, this stilted message was heavily censored by Baldwin prior to broadcast and makes obtuse reference to:

[T]he burden which constantly rests upon the shoulders of a Sovereign is so heavy that it can only be borne in circumstances different from those in which I now find myself ... further delay cannot but be most injurious to the peoples whom I have tried to serve ... and whose future happiness and prosperity are the constant wish of my heart. I take my leave of them in the confident hope that the course which I have thought it right to follow is that which is best for the stability of the Throne and Empire and the happiness of my

¹³⁶ ‘STATEMENT BY MR. LYONS’, *The Canberra Times*, Canberra, A.C.T., 11 December 1936, p. 1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

peoples.¹³⁸

This chapter has provided a narrative for the uncertain week between 3 December and the official announcement of the King's abdication in the early hours of 11 December. From then on, the press waiting at Parliament House had within a matter of minutes reproduced and cabled both texts to agencies across the nation in ample time for the morning newspapers. After a few hours of sleep in his suite, Lyons was due back on duty, where he would for the first time offer a fulsome account of events to the House of Representatives that morning. As we will see, he would be severely, and undeservedly, rebuked by his contemporaries and the Australian people for his cautious dealings with the British government.

¹³⁸ 'King's Message of Abdication', *The Canberra Times*, Canberra, A.C.T., 11 December 1936, p. 1.

Chapter 6: Plain Mr. Windsor

[T]hat such as [sic] person would be regarded as still worthy of the loyalty of the moral section of any part of the Empire is unthinkable.

-The Rev. James Gillespie, 14 December 1936.¹

An examination of the swift closure of the abdication episode from the morning of Friday 11 December and the subsequent erasure of Edward as an Australian public figure by the latter half of 1937 allows us to better understand whether or not the familial regard of the Australian people could be so simply transferred from one man to another. Did Australia follow Baldwin's lead in appealing to the British media to 'rally behind the new King' and 'maintain the integrity of the monarchy' overall?²

Firstly, this chapter offers an account of how Lyons broke his silence after confirming Edward's abdication, and the resulting criticism and commentary that eventuated from many quarters, before examining the Australian response to Edward's final broadcast to the Empire, and the marking of the proclamation of King George VI's accession to the throne. It charts the resignation and outrage with which the news was received by the Australian public, and the eventual transfer of affection from the old King to the new. It demonstrates how Lyons' continued acquiescence in the view of the British government cemented Australia's position as having aided Baldwin in a strategy to remove the King from the throne. Finally, by examining the ongoing attention paid to the Duke of Windsor and his bride that extended throughout the following year, I focus on the way the exiled couple, to some extent, engineered their own fall from favour in the imperial public eye by the final months of 1937.

¹ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Lyons from Gillespie, 14 December 1936.

² Quoted in Brendon and Whitehead, *The Windsors*, p. 90.

Lyons breaks his silence

After a few hours of rest, Lyons returned to Parliament on the morning of 11 December, to offer for the first time an explanation for the extraordinary turn of events over the previous week. Looking ‘tired and worn’, he took his place amid an air of ‘hushed expectancy’ emanating from the public and press galleries.³ After re-reading Edward’s message, he set out a full history of the correspondence that had passed between himself and Baldwin. The prime minister was at pains to assure his audience that Baldwin had asked him for his personal views on the morganatic option at a time when the matter was ‘highly secret and confidential’, and denied that any ‘pressure’ was exerted by any of the Dominion governments. Moving that Parliament assent to altering the Act of Succession in favour of the Duke of York, he concluded that:

Little remains to be said ... how deeply we regret His Majesty’s decision, and how profoundly grieved we all are at this sudden termination of a reign which seemed so full of golden promise ... We must turn our eyes to the future ... I appeal to members of this Parliament, and to the people of Australia, to show to our new sovereign all that loyalty and affection which they showed to his brother and his father.⁴

To some extent, the four differing strands of opinion expressed by the Australian public over the week just passed were also articulated in Parliament in response to Lyons’ statement. In the discussion that followed, Opposition politicians of different persuasions variously expressed the view that Edward ought to have done his duty for the good of the institution, or alternatively insisted that he should have enjoyed freedom to conduct his private life. Others deplored the loss of a leader with the valuable qualities needed to guide future imperial relations. All expressed dismay that the Government had provided advice without consultation and perceived that, as a result,

³ ‘FROM THE GALLERY’, *Examiner*, Launceston, Tas., 12 December 1936, p. 8.

⁴ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 11 December 1936, pp. 2900-01.

Australia had unwittingly aided in Britain's 'plan' to vacate the throne. These opinions are particularly useful, representing as they do the reflections of experienced orators. Although they had been purposely denied access to the full details, they nonetheless possessed a comprehensive understanding of the issue as represented not only by press reports, but public opinion as conveyed by their local constituents and consolidated by discussion within their respective parties.

The first to reply to Lyons' statement was the leader of the Opposition. According to a telegram sent by Whiskard to the Dominions Office, Curtin responded with 'notable dignity.'⁵ Certainly, and as in previous debates, Curtin displayed the expected uninterest in the personal dilemma experienced by the monarch, but his contribution to debates in the House that day nonetheless firmly reiterated his objections; firstly to the passing of legislation to suit the convenience of an individual and secondly, the in principle disagreement to the notion whereby a woman should occupy a status 'less than that would be the inherent right of her wifeness as the wife of her husband.'⁶ Curtin's remarks also suggest that he perceived Edward's wealth of experience as having equipped him for the office like no other. Rather than outright opposition to the stance of the British government, the Opposition leader's attitude towards the conflict between private happiness and duty to the Empire was revealed as akin to that of Billy Hughes; that is, the King's first obligation was to fulfil the demands of his office. Edward was, he observed:

[P]robably the most prominent and conspicuous symbol of the unity of the British speaking people, for he had travelled through every part of the dominions. He knew the people of the dominions probably better than anybody who previously held the office which came to him. It is a matter of deep regret that he should find it necessary from

⁵ TNA, DO 121/39. Telegram to Dominions Office from Whiskard, 11 December 1936. In the margin of this document, Macdonald simply noted 'Good.'

⁶ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 11 December 1936, p. 2902.

his own personal point of view to relinquish that office.⁷

In choosing to focus on the issue of the King's wife occupying a subordinate role, Curtin instead deliberately emphasised the importance of the continuity of the Kingship. Concluding that 'there appears to me to be nothing for this Parliament to do but to carry the motion' that Lyons had moved, he went on further emphasise this position by voicing his expectation that the new King uphold:

[T]he symbol of the union of the community constituting the British Commonwealth of Nations ... We all hope - I hope - that in the reign of the King who is to succeed King Edward the work which can be done for civilization by the British Empire will be of such a character as to make even more stable the institutionalism which it has developed and which has played so important a part in the history of the world.⁸

Rather than taking a stance against the trials of the individuals, or for that matter the Lyons government's secretive management of the episode that had so incensed him only days before, Curtin's focus on the legislative injustice of the situation meant that he avoided the major issue at stake - that the British government objected to the morality of the woman concerned.

Other parliamentarians held no such qualms. Although in his report to the Dominions Office Whiskard also remarked that 'debate was noticeable for its unusual dignity and restraint', *Hansard* reveals instead what can only be described as a series of escalating contretemps between the government and divisions of the Opposition.⁹ Uproar ensued, especially among Lang Labor supporters, many of whom were remarkably in favour of Edward as a symbol of democracy and a friend of the people. Beasley, for example, refused to accept Lyons' explanation, insisting that members were being treated 'like children' in 'the most momentous issue that the Parliament, the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ TNA, DO 121/39. Telegram to Dominions Office from High Commissioner Australia, 11 December 1936.

country and the Empire have ever faced.¹⁰ The Dominions would not accept the King's decision as final, he said:

[F]or their love and admiration for the gentleman who is abdicating the throne is so widespread that it will never die in the hearts of the people over whom he has reigned.¹¹

The government attempted to wrestle back control of the situation. With lesser emotion, Menzies as Attorney-General then set out the constitutional framework for the British government's proposed legislation to alter the laws of succession. *His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Act 1936* (UK) served to strip Edward of his kingly titles and privileges, and bar him and his descendants from any claim on the throne. Ironically, although passing of special legislation to allow for a particular type of marriage had been dismissed out of hand by the British and Dominion governments, this new Act, effectively enabling Edward's abdication in order to marry, apparently posed no similar problems.

Anne Twomey has examined in detail the unusual nature of this piece of legislation.¹² She explains how, as the enactment of the Statute of Westminster did not fully apply to New Zealand and Australia in 1936, those Dominions simply sought to have the British law extended to them as part of their own legislation, without the necessity for further legal steps. In the case of Canada, however, to whom the Statute applied in full, Parliament were required to 'consent and request' to altering the necessary legislation. The King could only be advised on the matter by his Canadian Parliament, allowing Mackenzie King a comparable participatory role to that of Baldwin. The case of South Africa was different again. Hertzog did not agree to

¹⁰ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 11 December 1936, pp. 2902-03.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2903, 2905.

¹² Anne Twomey, 'Changing the rules of succession to the throne', *Public Law*, 2 (2011), pp. 378-401, pp. 385-88.

passively give assent to British laws and instead enacted South Africa's own legislation the following year.¹³

In contrast, Australia did not legislate, but as merely passed resolutions of assent in both Houses. The Australian Parliament was also the only one in session at the time of the abdication, although as any reader of the world's newspapers could discern, had been recalled for this very purpose at the extraordinary request of the prime minister. As Twomey notes, 'assent' was, legally, simply regarded as a 'matter of courtesy.'¹⁴ Arguably, these two factors gave weight to later accusations of Lyons' supposed submissive acquiescence in Britain's demands. In contrast, and despite commencing from the same legal footing, New Zealand exhibited a more active role. Savage indicated New Zealand's assent in advance by way of executive act, but later passed a parliamentary resolution in each House which "ratified and confirmed" that assent for the purposes of convention.¹⁵

Although his intention was undoubtedly the opposite, Menzies's extended discussion revealed some of these uncertainties over Australia's proposed legal response to the abdication. Although left-wing member Jack Holloway was quick to point out that Australia's adoption of the Statute was still on notice, the Attorney-General confidently assured the House that some of its provisions, notably those effecting the succession, nonetheless operated 'of their own force.'¹⁶ Francis Baker interrupted to point to the importance of Australia's input, as with all the Dominion governments, in ensuring the collective agreement required to pass the Act. Rowland

¹³ The case of the Irish Free State, then actively bargaining for its independence, ably illustrates why Baldwin was eager to pass the legislation quickly and with the minimum of discussion. De Valera took advantage of the British government's preoccupation with the other Dominions to summon the Dáil Éireann, the Irish Parliament, and excise the monarch's influence in legislation governing the Free State's internal affairs. Williams, *The People's King*, p. 245. The attitude of the Irish Free State has not, as a matter of course, been part of the political context examined in this thesis, for reasons explained on p. 25.

¹⁴ Twomey, 'Changing the rules of succession to the throne', p. 385.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 'Debates', 11 December 1936, p. 2908.

James also emphasised that, without Australia's assent, the legislation could not proceed, thus upsetting 'the plot to depose the King.'¹⁷

In this unprecedented situation, it could be ventured that even the federal Attorney-General did not fully visualise how the intricacies of the Statute, then not wholly applicable to Australian law, worked in relation to the Constitution. Pausing only to dismiss 'those entirely mythical delusions' from which James was suffering, Menzies went on to argue that, having examined the terms of the Constitution himself, the easiest course was for Australia to assent by resolution. To this end, he cited the complexity of possibly undergoing two Royal Assent processes and cast doubt over the Parliament's 'direct power of its own motion to pass a substantive law' relating to the succession to the throne.¹⁸ Although Menzies conceded that 'our emotions are stirred', he maintained that 'our primary duty as a Parliament in a British community is to preserve both the constitutional rights of both the Parliament and the people.'¹⁹

Although Menzies was cheered by his supporters, dissenting responses within the House, including from within Curtin's own party, could not be silenced. Labor member Maurice Blackburn, a lawyer by profession, took to the floor to turn debate back to Lyons' unsatisfactory account of proceedings. He added his voice to the general dissatisfaction with the prejudiced morality inherent in the provision of advice, pointing out what Curtin, as the leader of the Opposition, had not. The insurmountable problem, he stated, was not that the King wanted a wife but who that wife would be. Lyons had committed a 'great wrong' he said, in 'suggesting that the people of this country would not tolerate the King marrying the person whom he wished to marry.'²⁰ Blackburn

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 2908.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 2909. This interpretation has not, it is believed, been re-examined in more recent years.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 2909.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 2910.

demonstrated a sympathetic attitude to Wallis, pointing out that she had been the innocent party in both of her divorce petitions.²¹

Lang Labor supporter Eddie Ward took up Blackburn's observation with alacrity. Why, he demanded, had 'these self-styled puritans' taken it upon themselves to protect the morals of the King in what should have been a private matter?²² He went on to comment that 'certain members' present had themselves married divorced women, earning himself a reprimand from the Speaker, but clarifying that his point was that a different standard of conduct had been delineated for the King as opposed to ordinary people.²³ Baker also protested that 'we have to take the members of the Royal Family as they are ... they should be able to conduct their own private lives as their own private concerns.'²⁴ Ward perceived significant social repercussions in Lyons' presumptive action, believing that the resultant abdication was a blow to the notion of democratic liberties that weakened the imperial relationship. He warned parliamentarians that no other action by a Dominion prime minister had:

[S]o weakened the position of the Crown as has the action taken by the present government. The King was popularly supposed to be the personal guarantor of the liberties of every individual subject, when, as a matter of fact, he was not in sufficient power to preserve even his own liberty.²⁵

Ward believed that conservatives had disapproved of the King stepping outside of his apolitical role by visiting the unemployed and expressing sympathy with their poverty and conditions; in short, by being 'difficult to handle.'²⁶ He argued that the abdication

²¹ Ibid., p. 2910.

²² Ibid., p. 2911.

²³ Ibid., p. 2913. To whom he was referring was not revealed.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 2922.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 2911-13.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 2913.

of one King in favour of another would change very little, observing that ‘the workers will still have to sweat and toil for British capitalism and imperialism.’²⁷

Others concerned with workers’ rights also seized on the democratic aspects of the issue. For Lang supporter Jock Garden, the episode encapsulated the triumph of modern masculinity over the prejudices of ‘sordid convention’, where the King’s oft-remarked upon desire to marry for love and willingness to protest on behalf of the dispossessed represented the rightful subordination of ‘the glories of office to the majesties of manhood.’²⁸ It was deeply hypocritical, he finished, for parliamentarians to approve of legislation allowing for divorce yet morally disapprove of divorced persons.²⁹

Harold Holt, a Nationalist and a young man at 28-years-old, offered the perspective of those who had ‘grown to maturity’ in the modern post-war world; that abdication remained a ‘major calamity’ as the former King had possessed unique qualities now lost to them. He claimed that from his earliest recollections, Edward always commanded his ‘complete allegiance’, explaining that:

The knowledge that he has relinquished the throne strikes us the most deeply ... He realized so clearly that we were passing through a period of great social and economic change, during which institutions which had been the bulwarks of other generations have been severely criticized, and some of them shaken. Because we believed he understood us, we looked to him to lop off from the tree of tradition the dead branches that threatened to interfere with its healthy growth within the British Empire ... had His Majesty chosen to select any woman, to whom he was legally entitled to be married, as his Queen, I, for one, would not have hesitated in my loyalty to him.³⁰

Baker, also a member of the younger post-war generation at 33-years-old, moved debate back to Australia’s subservience to Britain’s legislative leadership. The most troubling point of contention was, for him, the precedent set by the government’s

²⁷ Ibid., p. 2914.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 2915.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 2915.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2917.

apparent willingness to follow the lead of the British government in matters of great strategic importance. Baker protested that as to the passing of legislation, Parliament was ‘now asked merely to acquiesce in a fait accompli’ and was guilty of unconstitutional compliance and subservience in ‘a monstrous injustice.’³¹ The government, he perceived, had interfered in the rightful and direct relationship between Australians and their King. Lyons, he believed, had committed the nation as a whole to opposing the monarch on an issue where significant divisions of opinion existed. Baker commented that the British newspaper reports had claimed that all Dominion populations had felt the same, but ‘it was impossible to say whether that was so, or not.’³² He claimed that the Lyons government:

[J]ust does what the British Government does. It waits, no matter for how long a period, until the British Government has come to a decision, or until its representative in Australia has notified it of the British government’s decision, and then hastens to follow suit.³³

Baker’s views were shared by Labor’s Sol Rosevear. Describing the Lyons-Baldwin endeavour as an attempt to ‘politically sandbag the King of England’, he protested that members had:

[B]een brought here, not for the purpose of deliberating at all on this vital matter, but in order to suit the convenience of the United Kingdom, with a view to recording certain resolutions after the whole of the damage has been done ... honourable members have been hamstrung, hampered and refused information, and even the right to speak on this vital subject until it was too late.³⁴

The views of many politicians within the Opposition seemed to reflect the trends observable in the public response of the week prior to the abdication. In contrast to Lyons’ belief that simply assenting to an extension of British law was the correct course to follow, these perceptions advocate instead for a greater independence in legislative

³¹ Ibid., pp. 2917-18.

³² Ibid., p. 2918.

³³ Ibid., p. 2920.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 2922.

negotiations, continuing the autonomous spirit of the Balfour declaration of 1926 and taking up the full rights afforded by the Statute of Westminster.

Nonetheless, at least one other parliamentarian thought Lyons had acted appropriately in a difficult situation. With the exception of Menzies, no government member present had spoken out in support of their prime minister. Although United Australia Party member Eric Harrison began with the comment that Lyons' move to pledge Australia to 'follow blindly the lead of other governments' was 'distinctly dangerous' he was quick to ally himself with the government's agreed path.³⁵ He went on to assert that Lyons had acted with 'great delicacy', and believed his decision to ban open discussion in Parliament was astute, avoiding as it did any potential 'emotionalism' that could cloud rational judgement.³⁶ Harrison's view of the King's behaviour differed from those of Beasley, Baker and Holt, who saw Edward's personal values as critical to his successful Kingship. Abdication was for the greater good, Harrison commented, as in his view when a King assumed the responsibility of the office, 'he ceases to be an individual and becomes the highest expression of the ideals of the people whom he governs.' This tallies with Enid Lyons' impression of her husband's view of the monarchy.

Discussion in the Senate that day was markedly more restrained. Collings said carefully that he had viewed Edward as a King 'out of the ordinary', who had been expected to have become 'the most democratic monarch of all time, and one from whom we could expect great things.'³⁷ Despite the protestations in the lower House, in the end the Australian Parliament quietly adopted a Resolution giving the necessary consent for the Act, and, from there, their British counterparts moved to pass the

³⁵ Ibid., p. 2922.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 2922-23.

³⁷ Parliament of Australia, Senate, 'Debates', 11 December 1936, p. 2896.

necessary Abdication Act.³⁸

The formalities are completed

Australia's passive acceptance of the British government's charted course extended to the completion of most of the relevant formalities. Lyons made no move to distinguish Australia's response for posterity and seems eager, not unexpectedly, to draw the matter to a close with the minimum of further disruption and controversy. Continued support of the British government's management of the matter was critical. In his discussion of the aftermath of the abdication in Europe, Schwartzbach has noted that conservative opinion held that Baldwin's actions were 'reassuring proof of the strength of Britain's political system' and he was praised for his competency in maintaining stability despite the unpredictability of a feckless monarch.³⁹ A comparable sense of relief and admiration can be discerned in Lyons' letter to Baldwin, written following the latter's confirmation of the abdication. Lyons expressed his 'sympathy and appreciation' in the time of 'great strain and anxiety which we are all sharing but [the] brunt of which falls on you personally.' He believed Baldwin had 'shown rare qualities of leadership and discretion that have been of the utmost assistance to us all.' He concluded with the hope that 'in some measure we have been helpful to you during this time of great trouble.'⁴⁰ Baldwin agreed that 'these have been difficult days for all of us', but remarked that he would remember with pleasure 'the spirit of perfect co-operation with which those of us who are His Majesty's Prime Ministers have worked together in a time of trial for the British Commonwealth.'⁴¹ This exchange epitomises the relationship. Rather than an

³⁸ For further contextual discussion, see Twomey, 'Changing the rules of succession to the throne.'

³⁹ Schwartzbach, 'Love, Marriage and Divorce', p. 147.

⁴⁰ NAA, CP4/10, 1. Telegram to Baldwin from Lyons, 10 December 1936.

⁴¹ NAA, CP4/10, 1. Telegram to Lyons from Baldwin, 10 December 1936.

equal political partner, Australia had been merely ‘helpful’ in assisting to achieve an end result desired by the British government.

This argument is further strengthened by an examination of Lyons’ attitude to the completion of formalities. As mentioned in the Introduction, the Australian prime minister’s supposed ‘uncompromising stand’ against the King was first awarded particular prominence by Baldwin in 1949, when interviewed by biographer John Lockhart.⁴² The reproduction of these remarks in several Australian newspapers under the sub-header ‘Joe Lyons forced Britain’s hand’ caused distress to Enid Lyons, given that her husband who had supposedly ‘brought about the abdication’ had died a decade before.⁴³ Certainly, Lyons was by then unable to defend himself.⁴⁴ But contemporary archival records reveal instead that it was perhaps his liberal sense of tolerance and restraint that proved him to be an easy scapegoat in the aftermath of the abdication.

To explain, as previous chapters have demonstrated, the responses and attitudes of the other Dominion governments were less than straightforward. The Canadian prime minister, for example, had from the arrival of Baldwin’s first telegram made it clear that Canada would not support abdication unless it was voluntary and free from any collusion among the Dominion governments. Mackenzie King’s stated attitude towards public perceptions of the Dominions’ role in the incident may be usefully compared with Lyons’. As the abdication became an inevitable outcome, he noted as early as 9 December his concern that Canada be cited as ‘a factor of consequence.’ He remarked that while he was ‘most anxious’ to be helpful to Baldwin:

[B]oth Canada and myself as Canada’s Prime Minister would be put in a wholly wrongful light were anything said which could convey the impression that ... Canada any more than any other dominion or Canadian opinion any more than that of any other Dominion has been

⁴² Quoted in Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang*, p. 404.

⁴³ ‘SECRETS OF THE ABDICATION’, *Sunday Mail*, Brisbane, Qld., 27 March 1949, p. 4; Lyons, *So we take comfort*, p. 247.

⁴⁴ As were also Savage and Hertzog.

a determining factor in situation at any stage.⁴⁵

Mackenzie King astutely predicted a controversy that surfaced, albeit briefly, in the aftermath of the abdication. On 13 December, several Australian newspapers reproduced the remarks of an American newspaper speculating on the relevance of both Australia and Canada's input to discussions, and alleging that Baldwin had particularly feared that the dispute could cause Australia and Canada to abandon the Empire in the case of a war.⁴⁶ The Canadian prime minister then took steps to ensure that for posterity his precise position should be clarified. At the end of the month, in view of managing possible future questioning, he asked if the correspondence exchanged would be published in a public format.⁴⁷ The chilly response was unequivocal. Baldwin claimed that 'no question has been raised as to publication of the correspondence nor, in particular, has any request been made for information as to the details of views expressed by the various governments.' He warned that, as the matter stood, 'it would be far better ... to avoid any publication of correspondence which could, I feel, only serve to reopen issues now closed.'⁴⁸

Archival research has failed to reveal any suggestion that Lyons similarly attempted to quantify his position in response to the press' speculation. This willingness to comply with Baldwin's leadership and to conclude matters as quickly as possible were central to later understandings of Lyons having precipitated the abdication. However, this can perhaps be more accurately attributed to Lyons' gentleness and tolerant character. With little rest for over a fortnight, the episode had also taken a physical toll on the Australian prime minister, already in poor health.⁴⁹ Following

⁴⁵ TNA, HO 144/21070/1. Telegram to Dominions Office from F.Floud, 9 December 1936.

⁴⁶ For example, 'RADIO LISTENERS', *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 24 December 1936, p. 20.

⁴⁷ TNA, DO 35/531/2/1. Telegram to Baldwin from [?]Mackenzie King, 31 December 1936.

⁴⁸ TNA, DO 35/531/2/1. Telegram to [?]Mackenzie King from Baldwin, 7 January 1937.

⁴⁹ 'GEORGE VI PROCLAIMED KING AND EMPEROR', *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, Qld., 14 December 1936, p. 7.

Baldwin's plea in the House of Commons that 'no word be said that causes pain to any soul', Lyons likely agreed that the less said on the matter the better. As Baptist Minister Samuel Pearce Carey would later note approvingly on 18 December, the prime minister had 'spoken throughout no word he need wish to recall.'⁵⁰

Two further public announcements were to complete the formalities. Firstly, Edward would speak directly to the Empire's people for the first time in his oft-quoted abdication speech. This was broadcast by radio by the BBC in the evening of 12 December. Despite the success of Lyons' nationwide broadcast the previous day, which demonstrated the feasibility of a simultaneous ABC broadcast, this notion was met with little enthusiasm from the administrators. Pointing to the early hour as 'one subject to atmospheric disturbances so far as world broadcasts from England are concerned', it was suggested that a recording of the original might be relayed to Australian audiences at some unspecified future occasion.⁵¹ This is surprising, given that John Reith, founder and director of the BBC, had the previous week informed Baldwin of his ability to broadcast 'any statement or anything the Prime Minister feels might be helpful, not only at home but also to the Empire, at any hour of the day.'⁵² Considering that the ABC was not independent of government intervention, perhaps practicality became a convenient excuse for neglecting to broadcast this final, and significant, message from Edward to his listeners.

In any case, this communication had been heavily censored so as to incite no controversy. Baldwin was at pains to ensure the message emphasised a spirit of complete cooperation between the monarch and the government. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Edward could only speak on a matter of such intense public interest

⁵⁰ NLA, MS 1924/1/13292. Letter to the Brookes' from Carey, 18 December 1936.

⁵¹ 'FINAL MESSAGE', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, N.S.W., 12 December 1936, p. 12.

⁵² TNA, CAB 21/4100/2. Telegram to [?]Baldwin from [?]H. Wilson, 4 December 1936.

once he had ceased to be King, as otherwise his words could only be interpreted as being offered with the support of all of his governments. However, even now speaking as a private individual, Baldwin assured the Dominion prime ministers that Edward's message would be 'unembarrassing [sic]', as it had been prepared with the advice of 'people in whose discretion I have complete confidence.'⁵³ This caution may have been justified, as Edward's own first proposed broadcast, drafted before the abdication became an inevitable conclusion, contained much potential for embarrassment. Addressing his 'friends', he insisted that listeners knew him well enough to understand that he 'never could have contemplated a marriage of convenience.' Using emotive language, he had hoped to explain how:

It has taken me a long time to find the woman I want to make my wife. Without her I have been a very lonely man. With her I shall have a home and all the companionship and mutual sympathy which married life can bring. I know that many of you have the good fortune to be blessed with such a life, and I am sure that in your hearts you would wish the same for me.⁵⁴

In contrast, the final vetted version broadcast on 11 December contained little emotion, and in fact little by way of explanation. Introduced by Reith as 'His Royal Highness Prince Edward', the former King simply stated that he had never intended to restrict the matter, but 'until now it has not been constitutionally possible for me to speak.' He no more than referred to 'the reasons which have impelled me to renounce the throne', explaining simply that:

I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as King as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love ... my brother, with his long training in the public affairs of this country and with his fine qualities, will be able to take my place forthwith without interruption or injury to the life and progress of the empire. And he has one matchless blessing, enjoyed by so many of you, and not bestowed on me - a

⁵³ TNA, DO 121/32. Telegram to Dominion prime ministers from Baldwin, 10 December 1936.

⁵⁴ TNA, CAB 21/4100/2. Draft of proposed broadcast, 4 December 1936.

happy home with his wife and children.⁵⁵

To some, the message was curiously curt. From Bournemouth in England, Dora Brown wrote to her Australian friends, Herbert and Ivy Brookes, of her indifferent reaction. Edward ‘sounded absolutely calm and unmoved’, she remarked, ‘I can’t say we were affected to tears as many people seemed to be!’⁵⁶ However, the Brookes’ of Melbourne were unlikely to have been in a position to judge for themselves. Unlike many others within the Empire and Dominions, Australians and South Africans did not hear the message at the time of broadcast, owing to the time difference, which reportedly ‘did not favour transmission.’ Instead, recordings were distributed by the BBC, and the transcript reproduced in the nation’s newspapers over the following days.⁵⁷

Strikingly, this was not the case in Western Australia. This part of the country received the broadcast, albeit heavily disrupted by static, at 6am on 12 December.⁵⁸ It is not clear how exactly this eventuated, but considering the ABC’s stance, must be attributable to the actions of an independent commercial station, or possibly access to other networks across the Indian Ocean. Although the Perth *Mirror* was in agreement with Dora Brown that Edward’s voice was ‘slow [and] sad’, the *Daily News* observed that the immediacy of radio allowed for a certain poignant humanity to pervade the speech.⁵⁹ For example, his voice became suddenly earnest when mentioning Wallis and wavered over the reference to his mother. This connection sparked an emotional

⁵⁵ ‘GOD BLESS YOU ALL!’, *Sunday Times*, Perth, W.A., 13 December 1936, p. 2.

⁵⁶ NLA, MS 1924/1/13313. Letter to the Brookes’ from Brown, 29 December 1936.

⁵⁷ ‘Other Person Most Concerned Tried To Dissuade Edward’, *The Daily News* Perth, W.A., 12 December 1936, p. 8.

⁵⁸ ‘Broadcast Of Proclamation’, *The Daily News* Perth, W.A., 12 December 1936, p. 10.

⁵⁹ ‘SIR EDWARD WINDSOR’, *Mirror* Perth, W.A., 12 December 1936, p. 1; ‘Other Person Most Concerned Tried To Dissuade Edward’ *The Daily News* Perth, W.A., 12 December 1936, p. 8.

response in Western Australians, with tears brimming ‘in many an eye as pyjama-clad people sat by their wireless to hear him speak.’⁶⁰ **Image 33**

Lacking the immediacy of the original radio broadcast, without doubt one of the most significant speeches of the twentieth century, the reproduction of the transcript in other states does not appear to have generated much comment in response. For most people other than some Western Australians, this final opportunity to engage with their former King was lost. With this broadcast, Edward formally ceased his public life and left Britain for Austria that night under cover of darkness. For fear of jeopardising the resolution of Wallis’ divorce decree, he remained in exile from his beloved at Enzesfeld Castle, near Vienna, until the following year.

Finally, the proclamation of the new King George VI was announced in King’s Hall at Parliament House the same evening, 12 December. The accession had to be proclaimed at the unsociable hour of 10pm so as to coincide simultaneously with the announcement in Britain. Despite this late hour and the presence of a violent storm outside, the *Sydney Morning Herald* claimed that ‘hundreds’ of spectators attended the occasion.⁶¹ Flanked by his Secretary and two aides-de-camp, Hore-Ruthven presided over what seems to have been a dismal gathering. Lyons attended accompanied by the only two members of his government remaining in Canberra: Casey, his Treasurer, and Henry Gullett, the Minister for Trade Treaties.⁶² The task of reading the necessary text fell to Strahan, the prime minister’s Secretary. There was little fanfare and the ceremony lasted less than five minutes. Some among the crowd were quick to draw a comparison

⁶⁰ ‘SIR EDWARD WINDSOR’ *Mirror* Perth, W.A., 12 December 1936, p. 1.

⁶¹ ‘PROCLAMATION’, *The Sydney Morning Herald* N.S.W., 14 December 1936, p. 10.

⁶² ‘George VI. Officially Proclaimed King at Canberra’, *News*, Adelaide, S.A., 12 December 1936, p. 1.

with the abdication and the fierceness of the storm passing into the distance, and the ‘subsequent freshness of the atmosphere’ with the new reign just beginning.⁶³ **Image 34**

Popular enthusiasm was more in evidence the following Monday, 14 December, when across the country each state held their own celebratory ceremony that also served to mark the new King’s birthday. These typically involved the attendance of high ranking federal and people’s representatives, accompanied by no small degree of pageantry. In Adelaide, for example, a large crowd attended the reading of the proclamation by the resplendently attired state Governor, Lord Huntingfield on the steps of Parliament House. Gun salutes were fired and the spectators sang ‘God save the King’, reportedly ‘with obvious emotion.’⁶⁴ Officially, at least, the abdication chapter had been firmly closed. **Image 35**

Australians resign themselves

Despite the completion of the necessary public formalities between 11 and 14 December, emotions continued to run high and fervent discussion seethed among the people of Australia. In 1937, Hector Bolitho commented that, in the wake of the abdication, ‘Australians expressed their concern in sorrow rather than indignation.’⁶⁵ During these days in particular, but as also borne out over the remainder of the month, some degree of public opinion certainly acquired a regretful yet resigned character. For the most part, Australians settled in favour of the accession of King George VI. For some, however, it cannot be denied that the spirit of indignation still burned brightly.

⁶³ ‘PROCLAMATION’, *The Sydney Morning Herald* N.S.W., 14 December 1936, p. 10.

⁶⁴ ‘ACCESSION OF KING GEORGE VI’, *The Age*, Melbourne, Vic., 15 December 1936, p. 10.

⁶⁵ Bolitho, *King Edward VIII*, p. 131.

In Parliament on 11 December, Beasley had argued that this trend was demonstrative of the success of a covert strategy by the ‘propagandistic’ publications in the promotion of the new reign.⁶⁶ Ward also mooted the existence of a conservative conspiracy to set the trend of press commentary and ‘by innuendo and suggestions of immorality ... blind the people to the real issue involved.’⁶⁷ *Smith’s Weekly* also claimed that Baldwin had quoted public opinion in the Dominions to bolster conservative views in Britain, and that likewise, newspapers of the traditionalist character of *The Times* were being reprinted in Australia in order to ‘set the popular tide the way Baldwin wants it to run.’⁶⁸ Perhaps most realistically, the *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser* suggested that over the previous days ‘mob-psychology and unbridled hysteria’ had temporarily ‘submerged the judgement, the commonsense [sic] and the capacity for national outlook’ of most of the population.⁶⁹

While much of the above is a matter of conjecture and would be difficult to confirm one way or another, it would certainly be true to observe that the conservative metropolitan press immediately embarked on a program of sanctimonious regret for the demise of the former King, bolstered by determined promotion of the new King George VI. On the morning of 11 December, the Melbourne *Argus*, for example, recorded an early morning rush on newspapers, resulting in small knots of people forming to ‘express sorrow that a reign which had begun so auspiciously had ended so dramatically.’ The demotion of the former King was treated almost as a death. The editorial described a funereal scene where men and women discussed ‘incidents of the

⁶⁶ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, ‘Debates’, 11 December 1936, p. 2903.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2913-14.

⁶⁸ ‘Edward VIII is no pretender’, *Smith’s Weekly*, Sydney, N.S.W., 12 December 1936, p. 1.

⁶⁹ ‘KINGS AND PARLIAMENTS’, *Daily Advertiser*, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., 14 December 1936, p. 2.

King's tour when Prince of Wales, and affectionately recalled examples of his fondness for his people no matter how humble their lot.⁷⁰

Other publications expressed views in keeping with that of the Australian prime minister; that is, relief that the prestige of the monarchy was intact. The *Adelaide Advertiser*, for example, remarked indifferently on 14 December that 'Kings may go but the Crown remains [a] symbol of national unity.'⁷¹ Other conveyed disinterest in the fortunes of the unfortunate individual who had failed to perform his duties adequately and hence had been expelled from office. 'Like a flash King Edward has passed from the scene', the *Crookwell Gazette* stated, expressing mild contempt for the 'man without a country, [who had] slipped away to reside in a foreign land.'⁷² The *Courier-Mail* was similarly resigned. 'We can but let him go' it editorialised, noting that even if he had remained on the Throne, Edward's reign would have been only a brief moment in a 'long line of Kings stretching back into history.' The only route forward was, the article concluded, to transfer loyalty 'implicitly and unquestioningly' to the new King.⁷³

Much of the approving commentary also emphasised the suitability of the Duchess as the wife of a King. As the *Yorketown Pioneer* clumsily expressed, 'the unanimity of the empire in its attitude to the king's choice was impressive because it displayed the exceptionally high qualities deemed indispensable for the first lady in the land.'⁷⁴ Echoing her husband's sentiments, Enid Lyons spoke publicly and superlatively on 11 December of Elizabeth's dedication to the 'domestic life that is traditional in the Queens of England' and 'the best ideals of English womanhood.'⁷⁵ More specifically, the *Women's Weekly* was at pains to emphasise Elizabeth's 'straightforward nature, her

⁷⁰ 'HOW PEOPLE HEARD NEWS Sorrow Mingled With Relief', *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 12 December 1936, p. 20.

⁷¹ 'An Empire united', *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, S.A., 14 December 1936, p. 18.

⁷² 'FROM THRONE TO EXILE', *Crookwell Gazette* N.S.W., 16 December 1936, p. 1.

⁷³ 'LONG LIVE THE KING!', *The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, Qld., 11 December 1936, p. 18.

⁷⁴ 'Vale-Edward VIII', *The Pioneer*, Yorketown, S.A., 18 December 1936, p. 3.

⁷⁵ 'DUCHESS' CHARM AND DIGNITY', *News*, Adelaide, S.A., 11 December 1936, p. 4.

well known domesticity, and her singular personal charm.’⁷⁶ Brisbane’s Archbishop John Wand perceived the couple’s apparently happy marriage and children as evidence of ‘the very model of all that seems to us best and dearest in our own homes.’⁷⁷ Despite the claims of those that the individuals concerned did not matter, this focus on the Duchess served to emphasise that the monarch’s choice of consort was an insurmountable issue for many Australians. Far from his previous incarnation as a member of the family, Edward’s private inclinations fell far short of remarkably lofty moral ideals.

The merit of the individuals concerned was a recurrent and emotive theme in much of the debate following the abdication. This confirms that, for Australians, the character of the monarch was at least equal if not of greater importance than the fulfilment of their public role. This observation is further supported by the way Wallis remained the focus of much negative attention, despite her attempts to retreat from the public eye. By this point, she had fled Britain for France, never to return. Although the abdication was irrevocable, purist commentators continued to vilify her perceived morality and values. ‘An Empire discarded for one whose capacity for love has not endured in the case of two husbands’, lamented the *Lithgow Mercury* on 11 December.⁷⁸ Prejudice and emotion ran high. At the end of the month, Joseph Longton, an Australian journalist living in Baltimore, wrote a thousand word tirade in critique of both Wallis and Edward, whom he addressed with ‘less respect than I have for a rattlesnake.’ Although he also spared a few well-chosen words for Wallis, Longton’s attack firmly identified Edward as the instigator of the affair:

“You killed what hope for happiness that reposed in Mr Simpson’s home. “You coveted his wife. “YOU STOLE MR SIMPSON’S

⁷⁶ ‘Beloved New Rulers of the Empire’, *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, 19 December 1936, p. 31.

⁷⁷ ‘CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO OPPOSED STANDARDS OF LIFE’, *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Qld., 14 December 1936, p. 15.

⁷⁸ ‘THE KING ABDICATES’, *Lithgow Mercury* N.S.W., 11 December 1936, p. 3.

WIFE. "You broke Mr Simpson's home up. THEN YOU BROKE YOURSELF ... Supposing another HOME WRECKER and WIFE THIEF -- like yourself "HAD STOLEN YOUR MOTHER FROM YOUR FATHER', how would you feel about it?" ... Upon a recent trip I took through the South-South of the Mason and Dixon Line I heard southerners saying "If Edward was to COME DOWN SOUTH AND STEAL A MAN'S WIFE, we would tar and feather him and then burn him at the stake."⁷⁹

Longton's criticism of the King's adulterous part in the whole affair was rare. It seems that for most Australians the myth of Wallis' culpability persisted, rather than any blame being laid at Edward's door. Albeit with a lesser degree of venom than Longton, the Brisbane *Telegraph* remarked accusingly that although she 'must have known' and was 'supposed to have been concerned' with Edward's concern for workers and economic stability, Wallis had failed by her 'inaction' to persuade him from abandoning his 'rightful' course.⁸⁰

Others were in fact notably more generous towards Edward, concluding that, as in the words of the *Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser*, although 'his decision may not have concurred with our desires ... he, at least, was true to his own conscience.'⁸¹ The Rev. James Gillespie, an Australian living in London, agreed in a letter to Lyons on 14 December that Edward had done 'the only thing he could rightfully have done' in light of the public's widespread knowledge that he had been 'carrying on openly with an alien woman who had been divorced and again married, with her second husband still living.'⁸² The *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser* offered a more sympathetic view, arguing that Edward's dignified surrender had preserved some

⁷⁹ TNA, TS 22/1/1. Letter to Edward, Duke of Windsor, from Longton, 24 December 1936. Punctuation in original.

⁸⁰ 'KING EDWARD'S FATEFUL DECISION', *The Telegraph* Brisbane, Qld., 11 December 1936, p. 16.

⁸¹ 'Edward Makes His Decision', *The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser*, 11 December 1936, p. 4.

⁸² NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Lyons from Gillespie, 14 December 1936.

respect and affection.⁸³ For Francis Cotton, writing in *The Australian Worker* on 16 December, true masculinity entailed loyalty to an intended marriage partner; '[Edward] would have been less than a man had he not taken that course', he stated.⁸⁴

The variety in these differing views of Edward and Wallis' behaviour starkly render the well-entrenched double standard, already noted in Parliament by Beasley, Blackburn and Baker, that underpinned many Australian perceptions of the monarch's private life. Commonly, such observations were upheld by a hypocritical expectation that the head of state must exhibit loftier moral behaviour than that expected of ordinary people in their private lives. For example, in one breath the *Lithgow Mercury* claimed that a King 'can never be above his people' yet at the same time 'owe a greater duty to his Crown than his human feelings.'⁸⁵ The *Yorketown Pioneer* struggled to uncover the roots of this apparently indisputable fact, suggesting that 'the ordinary citizen' was deeply opposed to divorce, and that in this case, critics had 'fashioned what their ruler should be like and how he could act and no substitute will be permitted.'⁸⁶ Archbishop Wand, who pronounced the love between the couple as 'not proper for the wearer of the British crown', identified the monarch as a bastion of traditional morality in an increasingly modern world. He believed that the King must set an example of moral propriety as well as perform their duties. This, he explained in a speech to his Brisbane congregation, would counteract a dangerous social context not limited to 'laxity in married life.'⁸⁷

Wand's expression of his concerns for society was prompted by the widespread reporting of a vindictive speech broadcast on BBC radio by the Archbishop of

⁸³ 'KINGS AND PARLIAMENTS', *Daily Advertiser*, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., 14 December 1936, p. 2.

⁸⁴ 'A King Who Has Become A Man', *The Australian Worker* Sydney, N.S.W., 16 December 1936, p. 6.

⁸⁵ 'THE KING ABDICATES', *Lithgow Mercury* N.S.W., 11 December 1936, p. 3.

⁸⁶ 'Vale-Edward VIII.', *The Pioneer* Yorketown, S.A., 18 December 1936, p. 3.

⁸⁷ 'CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO OPPOSED STANDARDS OF LIFE', *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Qld., 14 December 1936, p. 15.

Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, on 13 December. Never previously had the most senior bishop of the Church of England publicly criticised the monarch, but Lang now rebuked the former King for his attempt to seek 'his happiness in a manner inconsistent with the Christian principles of marriage' and pointed to the murky morals of the King's social circle as responsible.⁸⁸ Like Wand, some Australians agreed that Edward's behaviour was reprehensible and he should be held accountable like any other man. 'It is a hopeful sign when the Archbishop of Canterbury ... declares that the King can do wrong, and is blameworthy because he has done so' stated Fred Bowden of Melbourne on 18 December.⁸⁹ In Sydney that week, Baptist Minister Wilfred Jarvis allocated some forty-five minutes to an enthusiastic critique of Edward's character and friends. It was a shame, he argued, that as a young man, Edward's head had been turned by ballrooms and world travel, concluding that he 'made a bad bargain, a mad bargain.'⁹⁰

Australia's lack of an established Church can also perhaps partially explain the lack of wholehearted agreement between religious bodies. A sizeable proportion expressed some degree of sympathy with Edward's predicament, even if at the same time staunchly condemning his behaviour on principle. Although he agreed with Lang's condemnation of the sliding moral values of the twentieth century, Donald Baker, the Anglican Bishop of Bendigo, admired the ex-King's 'frank, open conduct.'⁹¹ Although also despairing of any hope of revising attitudes and morals ('the world has gone too far for that'), Daniel Mannix also offered sympathy to the unfortunate King who 'brought all the trouble on himself.'⁹² The situation was the same elsewhere. In Sydney, the Anglican Archbishop Howard Mowll said generously that although Edward had

⁸⁸ 'EDWARD'S SOCIAL CIRCLE STANDS REBUKED', *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Qld., 14 December 1936, p. 15.

⁸⁹ NLA, MS 1924/1/13290. Letter to the Brookes' from Bowden, 18 December 1936.

⁹⁰ 'NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN STRAIN', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 14 December 1936, p. 17.

⁹¹ 'NEWS AND NOTES FROM KYABRAM', *Shepparton Advertiser*, Vic., 16 December 1936, p. 14.

⁹² 'RADIO LISTENERS', *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, N.S.W., 24 December 1936, p. 20.

departed the throne, 'we shall always keep him in our hearts.' Also in Sydney, the Presbyterian Rev. D.P. MacDonald cautioned his congregation against negative judgement and stated that when Edward renounced the throne, he 'claimed his rights as a man.'⁹³

Although opposition to Edward and support for the new reign constituted the bulk of Australian public opinion at this time, these examples discussed above reveal the existence of a significant body of moderate sympathy for Edward, if not support *per se*. Additionally, it is equally important to note that there was also a small yet vocal body of active and Australian support for the former King, although their commentary opposing the abdication inevitably dwindled fairly quickly in the face of such a consummate *fait accompli*. Whereas the conservative press moved quickly to express their alliance to the new King, still the liberal and left-leaning press protested against the removal of the former. *Smith's Weekly* maintained that it represented the typical 'Australian attitude'; that is, refusing 'to be stampeded from its loyalty into sitting in censorious judgment on the King and Empire.'⁹⁴ The Labor-leaning Bathurst *National Advocate* saw Lyons as having 'committed Australia to a policy altogether in variance with the views of the Australian people' and condemned the result as reducing 'one of the greatest friends the people ever had' to simply 'the football of the politicians.'⁹⁵

As in federal Parliament, some state labour politicians continued to publicly articulate their dissatisfaction with Lyons' management of the affair. In the Melbourne Legislative Council on 16 December, for example, Labor member Esmond Kiernan caused a stir by claiming that the actions of the Australian and British governments had humiliated the former King. He called for Lyons and Baldwin to be held accountable for

⁹³ 'NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN STRAIN', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 14 December 1936, p. 17.

⁹⁴ 'Edward VIII is no pretender', *Smith's Weekly*, Sydney, N.S.W., 12 December 1936, p. 1.

⁹⁵ 'THE LYONS GOVERNMENT AND THE KING', *National Advocate*, Bathurst, N.S.W., 10 December 1936, p. 2.

‘the manner in which they had betrayed the best wishes of the people of Australia.’⁹⁶

Edmund Dwyer-Gray, the Treasurer in the Tasmanian government, published a damning editorial in the *Voice* of 12 December, alleging the deposition of the King for his anti-capitalist and industrialist stance following ‘some miserable lying, cowardice, evasion and lack of candour’ in London and Canberra. Like many federal Lang Labor supporters, Dwyer-Gray lamented the particular qualities of the ‘Poor Man’s King’ now lost. ‘The worst sequel will be the aftermath of “might have beens.”’, he said. ‘King Edward could have done so much no other can do.’⁹⁷ **Image 36**

In contrast, other labour and left-wing commentators were more in agreement with Curtin that the individual monarch receded in importance, at least while they performed their duties adequately. The socialist movement decried individual self-interest to the detriment of others, and so may explain perceptions that Edward was beloved when he appeared to take action on aspects of benefit to society but fell from favour when he appeared motivated by his own personal gain. The *Labor Call*, the official publication of the Victoria Labor Party, for example, saw the resolution of the issue as self-evident. ‘The individual, no matter who he may be, must be subordinate to the institution’, it stated, casting doubt over whether the former King, as a lone individual lacking in any political power, would have had any capacity to effect real change in any case.⁹⁸ Cotton took a more sanguine view of the future, hoping that Edward’s abandonment of the throne would not necessitate his retreat from public life, where his qualities and labour sympathies could be usefully employed. ‘What will he do

⁹⁶ ““HUMILIATION OF KING” Member’s Attack’, *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 16 December 1936, p. 7.

⁹⁷ ‘Much to the Point’, *Voice*, Hobart, Tas., 12 December 1936, p. 8.

⁹⁸ Quoted in ‘LAWS OF THE MONARCHY’, *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, N.S.W., 11 December 1936, p. 44.

with his newly acquired manhood?’ he wondered, ‘Will he stand and fight with brain and voice and pen for a larger measure of right for the mass of his fellow men?’⁹⁹

Those Australians who had supported the King remaining on the throne did not generally share Cotton’s optimism for the future, or hold out hope that the decision could be reversed. The reality of abdication caused great anguish and regret to those who perceived Edward as a ‘people’s King.’ In Sydney, James Walker, the President of the Masonic Veterans’ Association of New South Wales, protested that ‘English people all over the world’ had wished that ‘best and most loved King in the world’, a ‘warm friend’ of returned soldiers, the unemployed and the poor, had remained on the throne for the rest of his life.¹⁰⁰ ‘Unemployed’ lamented to the Hobart *Mercury* on 14 December that as long as Edward lived he would ‘always be King in the hearts of the vast majority of the people of our Empire.’¹⁰¹ H.H. Nesbitt wrote to the Newcastle *Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate* to remind readers that a large section of the returned soldier population ‘still say “God bless him wherever he is”’, and were prepared to ‘take up cudgels’ against anyone heard to utter derogatory statements.¹⁰² Similarly, Don McEachern of Taree, New South Wales, penned a poem published in the *Northern Champion* that asserted Edward ‘still reigns for loyal hearts ... methinks, he’s still a king, the world his Empire, too.’¹⁰³ In Wagga Wagga too, events inspired A.R.D. Moye to put poetic pen to paper, commanding that readers of the *Daily Advertiser* ‘hear now thy nation’s anguished cry ... Goodbye, Edward, goodbye, goodbye!’¹⁰⁴ Kathleen Stephen of West Merrylands, New South Wales, urged the prime minister to ‘not forget

⁹⁹ ‘A King Who Has Become A Man’, *The Australian Worker* Sydney, N.S.W., 16 December 1936, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ ‘REFERENCE AT LUNCHEON’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, N.S.W., 10 December 1936, p. 11.

¹⁰¹ ‘LETTERS’, *The Mercury*, Hobart, Tas., 14 December 1936, p. 6.

¹⁰² ‘KING EDWARD’S ABDICATION’, *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate*, N.S.W., 18 December 1936, p. 5.

¹⁰³ ‘EDWARD STEPS DOWN’, *The Northern Champion*, Taree, N.S.W., 16 December 1936, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ ‘ABDICATION’, *Daily Advertiser*, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., 17 December 1936, p. 7.

him whom we have served and still esteem. God bless Sir Edward Windsor!’ she finished.¹⁰⁵

In other quarters the abdication met with disbelief and concern. ‘I cannot accept the abdication of Edward VIII, and therefore am unable to recognise any other sovereign in his place’, one writer from Willoughby, New South Wales, firmly informed Lyons.¹⁰⁶ Charles Gilbert of Oakleigh, Victoria, suspected the worst. ‘Would you kindly try to get the real reason our beloved late sovereign left the throne’, he beseeched the prime minister on 12 December, going on to explain:

It seems clearly to me as I read the tragic affairs that our beloved King has been so worried the last few months ... I strongly believe he has momentarily lost his reason ... My idea is he will not marry Mrs Simpson in the next three months but might put an end to himself in some tragic manner ... he should be most strongly guarded and watched before it is too late to save him. If you could get in touch with his professional doctor in London on this theory I think we may be able to save him from further calamity. As you know he is so much beloved by everyone at home and abroad.¹⁰⁷

After this week and the completion of the public formalities, the debate over Edward’s behaviour largely lost its momentum. Although for the remainder of that month, politicians would continue to deliberate over Lyons’ controversial management of the episode, and some quarters of the population would continue to employ Edward as an example of moral breakdown, it was clear to the people of Australia that their King, whether beloved or reviled, had been exiled for good.

The transfer of affection to a new King

‘I venture to prophesy’, remarked the Bishop of Bendigo on 16 December, ‘that we shall witness such an exhibition of loyalty to the throne as we have never seen

¹⁰⁵ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Lyons from Stephen, 13 December 1936.

¹⁰⁶ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Lyons from (signature illegible), 11 December 1936.

¹⁰⁷ NAA, A461, V396/1/1. Letter to Lyons from Gilbert, 12 December 1936.

before.’¹⁰⁸ He was correct. On the whole, Australians were receptive to the replacement of one King with another, as long as the newcomer could display the desirable qualities. In the harsh light of abdication, it had never been clearer to observers exactly what these qualities should be. Although in comparison to 1920, the royal tour of 1927 had been a fairly low-key affair lacking in public access to the Duke and Duchess, it nonetheless provided some reassurance to the people that the couple were familiar with public responsibilities.

In this light, their comparative aloofness and practiced dedication to official rather than social duties acquired greater significance in hindsight. While admitting that King George VI was not ‘of the type to fire popular imagination as his brother did’, the *Mullumbimby Star and Byron Bay-Bangalow Advocate* was nonetheless confident that ‘there would be no shirking of duty and that he will be conscientiousness personified’ in the style of his traditionalist father.¹⁰⁹ As evidenced by the weeks past, the fact that the new King was securely married and had already ensured the succession of the Windsor dynasty was also viewed as a ‘great advantage.’¹¹⁰ Rather than seeking out and praising perceived attractive modern and democratic qualities and a disregard for convention in their monarch, Australian attention now sharpened towards their new ruler’s record of dutiful behaviour in his public life, and staid domesticity in his private dealings.

The 1927 meeting between Australians and their new King hurriedly acquired a new importance. From both houses of Parliament, Patrick Lynch, the President of the Senate, and Speaker George Bell sent a letter of congratulation that affirmed the people’s ‘happiest recollections’ of the visit.¹¹¹ It had been during this meeting that the

¹⁰⁸ ‘NEWS AND NOTES FROM KYABRAM’, *Shepparton Advertiser*, Vic., 16 December 1936, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ ‘KING GEORGE VI’, *Mullumbimby Star and Byron Bay-Bangalow Advocate*, 24 December 1936, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ ‘THE NEW REIGN’, *Daily Commercial News and Shipping List*, Sydney, N.S.W., 15 December 1936, p. 4.

¹¹¹ NAA, A3522, 3/2/2. Letter to King George VI from Lynch and Bell, 15 December 1936.

couple decisively ‘endeared themselves to the citizens of the Commonwealth’, J.P. O’Toole of Queenscliff, Victoria, told Lyons.¹¹² ‘So many of us had the honour of seeing you’, Ruth Fairfax of Edgecliffe, New South Wales, wrote to the King.¹¹³ Thus far, Lyons’ expressed hope that the Australian public would redirect their ‘admiration and loyalty’ proved largely successful.

As Bessant has remarked, in the wake of the abdication Edward also abruptly disappeared from educational material such as the School Papers, becoming a ‘non-person.’¹¹⁴ Part of this departure can also be attributed to the practical reality of replacing one public figure with another in advance of commercial deadlines expedited by the Coronation. In an era of ‘make-do’, vendors of commercial goods scrambled to replace images of the old King with the new. For example, Edward’s portrait was pasted over with a photograph of his brother in posters already printed in advance of the Coronation.¹¹⁵ A baker on board a Bass Strait ferry service was praised by the passengers for his ingenuity in convincingly altering the facial features of the kingly figure atop the steamer’s Christmas cake.¹¹⁶ On the whole, however, he seems to have retreated just as easily from the hearts and minds of Australians. As early as Christmas 1936, the *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advisor* was able to report that the local people had ‘settled down to business as usual under the new King.’¹¹⁷ **Image 37**

In the British context of the aftermath of the abdication, some authors have argued that Edward’s swift disappearance was the result of a deliberate strategy by the Establishment. Bloch, for example, has convincingly suggested that, over the following years, the royal family feared that the former King’s popularity, undiminished in some

¹¹² NAA, A3522, 3/2/2. Letter to Lyons from O’Toole, 12 January 1937.

¹¹³ NAA, A3522, 3/2/2. Letter to King George VI from Fairfax, undated.

¹¹⁴ Bessant, “‘We just got to look at her’”, p. 76.

¹¹⁵ ‘King Edward VIII collection’, NMA.

¹¹⁶ ‘THE BAKER’S ART’, *The Mercury*, Hobart, Tas., 28 December 1936, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ ‘OUR SYDNEY LETTER’, *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, Qld., 24 December 1936, p. 11.

quarters, and the public's vocal dissatisfaction with the government's management of the episode would jeopardise the longevity of his brother's Kingship.¹¹⁸ In light of the South Wales episode, Edward's political leanings coupled with a body of existing public support and sympathy presented a dangerous combination. Having renounced all his titles and as 'plain Mr. Windsor', he may have considered embarking on a fresh political career.¹¹⁹ Accordingly, certain steps were taken to ensure his on-going banishment from England, the constraint of his income in the civil list, and the repudiation of his supposed political and social ambitions.

However, as Gough Whitlam would later comment in 1972, the conferring of particularly restrictive styles and titles proved a vindictive masterstroke. Williams further reveals the deliberations over titles between the new King and his advisors that effectively 'neutered' the former King and curtailed any ambitions he may have harboured to participate in political life.¹²⁰ By conferring on Edward a royal dukedom, styled 'His Royal Highness the Duke of Windsor', his brother in one stroke removed Edward's eligibility for political life. As a politically-neutral royal personage, he could not neither sit nor vote in the House of Lords, and as a Duke he could neither stand nor be elected to the House of Commons as an ordinary citizen. The attitude of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth and King George VI towards the withholding of Wallis' rightful royal status was equally spiteful. Although as in any other marriage, she was legally entitled to equal status to her husband, what eventuated was ultimately a morganatic marriage. For the remainder of the couple's life in exile, her designation as the non-royal Duchess of Windsor would instigate what Williams refers to the 'festering pain' of bitter estrangement from the family.¹²¹ The disparity in status between man and wife

¹¹⁸ Bloch, *The secret file of the Duke of Windsor*.

¹¹⁹ 'DUKE OF YORK TO SUCCEED', *The Telegraph* Brisbane, Qld., 11 December 1936, p. 1.

¹²⁰ Williams, *The People's King*, pp. 235-36.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 276-77.

was also strategic, making it difficult for Wallis and Edward to be respected in the Society circles they wished to exert influence within.

In Australia, the more radical and liberal press pounced upon rumours of a possible British plot to extinguish Edward from public life. The *Worker*, for example, claimed that a 'gentleman's agreement' had ruled that the couple should 'come before the public as little as possible.'¹²² According to the *Worker*, rumours in 'political circles' in Canberra held that instructions had come from London to impose a blanket ban to avoid popularising the Duke to the disadvantage of his brother.¹²³ Anecdotally, it seems certain that the spectre of Edward was unwelcome in any media from the official perspective. For example, although copies of the final broadcast could be purchased as souvenirs in America, Britain and Australia made no move to circulate copies.¹²⁴

Hopes that the couple would of their own initiative retreat from public life proved forlorn. If, on the whole, Australians had largely accepted the new King, at every turn they were besieged by ongoing coverage of Edward and Wallis. In some sections of the press, the couple appeared with as much regularity throughout 1937 as Edward had as King in 1936. He was 'still big news' on the London dailies' front pages, proclaimed Frank McIlraith, *Smith's Weekly's* correspondent on 20 February.¹²⁵ Although as in the case of the *School Paper*, no mention of the incident appears in the women's periodicals, such as *New Idea* or *Everylady's Journal*, this was not the case for some of the more sensational proprietors. The drama of the situation continued to offer untold commercial opportunities. The Sydney publisher Thomas Scott, for example, prepared a lurid magazine promising 'romance, suspense, thrills, and supreme self-

¹²² 'EDWARD DUKE OF WINDSOR', *Worker*, Brisbane, Qld., 27 April 1937, p. 24.

¹²³ 'EX-KING AND THE CENSOR', *Worker*, Brisbane, Qld., 30 March 1937, p. 9.

¹²⁴ TNA, DO 35/531/2/8. Letter to Batterbee from Wigram, 8 January 1937.

¹²⁵ 'Still Big News', *Smith's Weekly*, Sydney, N.S.W., 18 March 1937, p. 12.

sacrifice!' within its pulp paper pages.¹²⁶ The abdication, the preface entreated readers, 'contained far more of the elements of Tragedy than anything ever shown on the screens or the stages of the world. Not Shakespeare, not the records of Ancient Greece or Rome, ever dealt with such material.' Having survived the shock, for some Australians the couple acquired the gilded patina of romantic drama as seen in imported American cinematography from the Hollywood studios. **Image 38**

Edward's self-imposed Austrian exile also continued to excite great interest in the world's press during the early months of 1937. The Australian government made some attempt to restrict commentary by applying some mild censorship restrictions to related cinematographic material. In March, for example, some innocuous footage of a distant Edward skiing down a hill was cut from a Fox Movie-tone newsreel that was to be shown in Australian cinemas. The film, explained Lionel Hurley, the Chief Censor, was 'of a character not desirable for the screen.'¹²⁷ Frustrated at the banning of this 'completely harmless' footage, Fox Movie-tone News' manager, Mr. H. Guinness, revealed that from his perspective there had been an almost all-encompassing ban on films of the couple, even those intended for reference or library purposes.¹²⁸ It seems most likely that Hurley and the Australian film distributors may have looked to the lead of their English counterparts for guidance in this matter. As the Perth *Daily News* speculated, those in the English trade were held to understand, unofficially at least, that there was an embargo on imagery of the Duke prior to the Coronation, so as to avoid any 'jarring note.'¹²⁹ The official line was much the same; Hurley ruled that related

¹²⁶ Unknown author, *The Uncensored story of a royal romance: the greatest love story in all history, ex-King Edward and Mrs. Wallis Simpson, romance, suspense, thrills, and supreme self-sacrifice!* (Sydney: Thomas Scott, 1937). Item Npf 941.0840922 U59, NLA.

¹²⁷ 'DUKE OF WINDSOR', *The West Australian*, Perth, W.A., 24 March 1937, p. 20.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ 'NO SURPRISE IN ENGLAND', *The Daily News*, Perth, W.A., 20 March 1937, p. 1.

cinematography images would be subject to special consideration ‘depending on their character’ until after the Coronation.¹³⁰

The context of this decision is revealing. During the early months of 1937, most journalists across the world were transfixed with the forthcoming resolution of the Simpsons’ divorce case. Thomas Barnes, the King’s Proctor, had in February, at the behest of a private citizen, undertaken extensive investigations into any possible collusion in the Simpsons’ divorce proceedings. Despite the seemingly smooth transfer of affection to the new King and the restoration of imperial cohesion and the dignity of the throne, some Australians still perceived the eventual unchallenged resolution of the divorce as a threat. For some, moral standards and worldwide respect for the legislative system were at stake, given the many anomalies in the case and Edward’s conspicuous absence as co-respondent. As the noxious Longton warned the King:

If you do figure upon taking THE BUTTERED BUN back to England as “The Duchess of Windsor” (and not the MISTRESS she has been) You had better prepare yourself for a GOOD OLD FASHIONED ENGLISH REBUKE ... THE EYES OF THE CIVILISED WORLD ARE UPON THE KING’S PROCTOR. If that divorce is not INVALIDATED, the great respect that the whole world has for BRITISH JUSTICE and FAIR PLAY will be INVALIDATED and BRITAIN WILL CRUMBLE TO DUST.¹³¹

Similar sentiments were expressed by ‘An English Woman’ who wrote to the King’s Proctor from Adelaide to reinvigorate the established sexual double-standard that Wallis’ adultery was self-evident in the case. ‘Save the Duke of Windsor from a designing woman’, she pleaded, going on to argue that if Barnes were to prevent the divorce, ‘then you will have a good example of truth and honour for the English people.’¹³² She wrote again in more threatening tones two weeks later, demanding that

¹³⁰ ‘Censoring Duke of Windsor Films’, *Narrandera Argus and Riverina Advertiser*, N.S.W., 23 March 1937, p. 2.

¹³¹ TNA, TS 22/1/1. Letter to Edward, Duke of Windsor, from Longton, 24 December 1936. Punctuation in original.

¹³² TNA, TS 22/1/1. Letter to Barnes from ‘An English Woman’, 12 February 1937.

he enact this duty ‘in the Fear of God, if not then God will demand a just payment from you.’¹³³ Some comparable feeling can be tentatively discerned in Canada, where writer P. Sheppard warned that ‘nothing is to be gained by playing ostrich...it is safer and nobler to face the facts.’¹³⁴ Responses such as this are consistent with those observed at the end of the previous year towards the prospect of a morganatic marriage, and all that implied about the privileging of the rights of the individual over the state. The finalisation of the divorce once again agitated perceptions, temporarily soothed by the accession of King George VI, that Edward had used his influence to undermine the legislative institution in pursuit of his private happiness. As one person, who identified themselves as ‘One whose divorce was disallowed for the merest technical hitch’, lamented bitterly to Barnes, the case was a ‘glaring example of one law for the rich and one for the poor.’¹³⁵

In any case, Barnes appears to have been unruffled by the Fear of God. His investigations concluded that although the Simpsons’ divorce was most probably arranged, he had found no evidence to support that assumption.¹³⁶ On 3 May 1937, Wallis’ divorce was made absolute, a little over one week before the Coronation of King George VI on 12 May. This announcement proved captivating for the world’s press, so much so that the Perth *Sunday Times* correspondent in London observed that in British newspapers the forthcoming Windsor wedding ‘out-starred’ reports of the Coronation preparations.¹³⁷ Despite Hurley’s likely desire to limit Edward’s public visibility until after his brother was crowned, the close proximity of these two news items doubtless prompted readers to consider how differently the story could have

¹³³ TNA, TS 22/1/1. Letter to Barnes from ‘An English Woman’, 25 February 1937.

¹³⁴ TNA, TS 22/1/3. Letter to Barnes from Sheppard, 15 December 1936.

¹³⁵ TNA, TS 22/1/3. Letter to Barnes from unknown correspondent, undated. Although this file contains letters originated from across the world, the nationality of the writer is unknown.

¹³⁶ Williams, *The People’s King*, p. 273.

¹³⁷ ‘Coronation Out-Starred by Windsor Wedding’, *Sunday Times*, Perth, W.A., 9 May 1937, p. 5.

eventuated. The couple married on 3 June, just three weeks after the Coronation. The venue was Château de Candé, a French castle belonging to their friend, the millionaire industrialist and fascist Charles Bedaux. Not one member of the royal family attended.

Image 39

From this point onwards, it seems that Australians' professed indifference towards Edward turned mostly to antipathy. On 11 June, the editor of the *Cessnock Eagle and South Maitland Recorder* felt that, having experienced seven months of fervent publicity, the best thing would be for the couple to 'sink into oblivion' unless they soon accomplished 'something of benefit to the community.'¹³⁸ The Hobart *Mercury* of 16 June argued that Edward should have displayed more discretion in the timing of his marriage, so as to allow the Coronation celebrations to run their course before he came back into the public eye. The newspaper despaired over the unrelenting news coverage of the wedding that lent a 'false glamour' to the story.¹³⁹

The public screening, or otherwise, of cinematographic films of the couple's wedding also proved controversial, less so for the content than the quantity of commentary generated. On 18 June, left-wing Senator Gordon Brown drew unwelcome attention to the issue in Parliament, seeking explicit confirmation from the government that relevant films had not been subject to particularly stringent restrictions exceeding normal censorship guidelines.¹⁴⁰ Had the coverage simply been broadcast as a matter of course within normal newsreel programs, it would probably have passed with little comment. However, rather than ensuring Edward's desired slide into oblivion, the suggestion of ungenerous censorship created not a nonentity but a martyr of the Duke. 'When will this darn-fool spoon-feeding of royal propaganda stop?' asked the

¹³⁸ 'THE WINDSOR WEDDING FILM', *The Cessnock Eagle and South Maitland Recorder* N.S.W., 11 June 1937, p. 5.

¹³⁹ 'A SHADOWED ROMANCE', *The Mercury* Hobart, tas., 16 June 1937, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ Parliament of Australia, Senate, 'Debates', 18 June 1937, p. 49.

Katoomba *Blue Mountains Times*.¹⁴¹ The government's attempts to handle 'human problems by means of suppression' were more divisive than the 'frank acceptance of public interest and regard for a former monarch and still popular member of the royal family', warned the *Newcastle Sun*.¹⁴²

By the time twelve months had passed since the abdication, this generous estimation of the Duke's popularity seems largely unsustainable. As Ziegler has explained, the couple sparked alarm and condemnation within the Establishment following their tour of Germany in October 1937. Ostensibly undertaken in a private capacity for the purpose of 'studying housing and working conditions', the Duke and Duchess (the latter obsequiously addressed at all times as 'Your Royal Highness') were publicly feted by Hitler and his colleagues.¹⁴³ Although Edward was at great pains to stress the unofficial nature of the trip, it nonetheless confirmed for the Germans that the Duke, a man still possessing some degree of public notoriety and possibly nurturing a grudge towards the Establishment, supported their cause.¹⁴⁴ The couple's subsequent plan, eventually abandoned, to similarly peruse working and housing conditions in the United States the following month was similarly misguided, orchestrated as it was by the reviled capitalist Bedaux, the 'anathema to organized [sic] labour' in America.¹⁴⁵

Image 40

In Australia, the dismay this news generated mirrored that of Britain and America, the latter previously mostly in favour of the couple's continued public visibility in view of Wallis' nationality. Although 'A Devonian' suggested to the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* that the couple should be invited to make Queensland their permanent home as it was not 'right that [Edward] should be living in foreign

¹⁴¹ 'WEDDING FILMS CENSORED', *The Blue Mountains Times*, Katoomba, N.S.W., 11 June 1937, p. 2.

¹⁴² 'THE DUKE'S WEDDING FILMS', *The Newcastle Sun*, N.S.W., 8 June 1937, p. 6.

¹⁴³ Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, pp. 391-95.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

countries', it seems that few were in agreement.¹⁴⁶ Although now straying outside of this thesis' scope, press commentary from the latter half of 1937 clearly coincides with the trends of opinion observed in Britain that would later come to mar the Duke and Duchess' reputation as sympathisers with Hitler's National Socialist philosophy.¹⁴⁷ The *Goulburn Evening Penny Post* commented that Edward would find it impossible to 'live as an ordinary man' and through his ill-thought-out associations and activities, was now 'playing with fire.'¹⁴⁸ Although the Duke's spokesman hurriedly issued a press release affirming that, as a newly private individual, Edward's comings and goings would no longer be publicly announced, the damage had already been done.¹⁴⁹ In Australia, the promise of Edward's public life, evidenced by perceptions of his advantageous qualities, had been decisively erased by later understandings of his behaviour as reckless and selfish.

This chapter might suggest that the closing stages of the abdication episode reveal a profound divide within the Australian population at large as to how a monarch's behaviour should relate to and inform their position. The conservative end of the social and political spectrum valued an unobtrusive personal life that enhanced and perpetuated their position as the symbol of an unchanging institution. At the other end, more liberal and left-wing commentators saw the former King's insistence on personal happiness as an intrinsic part of modern masculinity. These findings also underscore the fact that, despite protestations to the contrary, the perceived character of the monarch is of the utmost importance and is held to higher moral standards than are expected for the rest of the population. The reaction of both Australian people and politicians to Lyons' seemingly presumptuous acceptance of Britain's leadership further reveal the

¹⁴⁶ 'THE DUKE OF WINDSOR', *The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, Qld., 11 November 1937, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ For further discussion, see Bloch, *Operation Willi*.

¹⁴⁸ 'THE DUKE STAYS IN PARIS', *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, N.S.W., 8 November 1937, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ 'NO LONGER A PUBLIC FIGURE', *The Telegraph*, Brisbane, Qld., 8 November 1937, p. 6.

remarkable depth of advocacy for Australia's independence in legislative negotiations, continuing the autonomous spirit of the Balfour declaration of 1926 and exploring the parameters of the terms afforded in principle by the Statute of Westminster.

Despite the British government's uncertainties over Edward's suitability for the role that arose during the later 1920s, the residual traces of Australian perceptions of a 'democratic' monarch, a friend of the people, were still in evidence in 1936. Although many liberal and left-wing Australians continued to express great regret and indignation, this nonetheless dwindled quickly in the face of such a final and decisive act, perhaps hastened by the way Edward's final radio broadcast was heard by so few. Overall, his departure was accepted with resignation, and, aided by the fervent promotion advocated by the conservative press, Australians turned to their new monarch. However, if there was indeed a transfer of affection to the new King and Queen, this was intersected by generational differences and political skirmishes that were not resolved by the removal of Edward. Generating further public fascination with royal private lives, the demise of the King's career was more open-ended in its political and cultural consequences for the Crown than many previous commentators have suggested.

The disparity between qualities previously perceived as essential for the reign of Edward and subsequently that of George are also from this point clearly observable. Australians wished for a familiar and personable monarch, but only to a certain degree. The nature of the attraction was revealed to be superficial. Rather than seeking out and praising perceived attractive modern and democratic qualities and a disregard for convention, Australians now professed to value a record of dutiful dedication to public life, and a marriage to a morally upstanding woman, who had already by virtue of bearing children ensured the succession of the House of Windsor for the next

generation. By this point, the spectre of Edward was effectively banished from the Australian popular, political and imperial lexicon.

Conclusion

The monarchy is more than the monarch ... it endures though Kings
pass: though Kings, alas! forsake their trust.

-*The Courier-Mail*, 11 December 1936.¹

This thesis contributes to present inter-war historiography on Australians and the monarchy by providing a narrative for the previously under-researched evolution of Edward's public life in this country between approximately 1916 and 1936. In analysing the historical context that accompanied a shift in Australian perceptions of Edward's public persona between his 1920 royal tour and his abdication of 1936, my objectives have been twofold. The first has been to provide a descriptive Australian account of what has been most commonly presented as a public life that resonated mainly within Britain, and in doing so illustrate the potency of the relationship that existed between Australia, as one of the Dominions, and the Crown. Secondly, through identifying the changing nature of Edward's appeal as espoused by the public, the press and political rulers over time, I aimed to establish fresh insights into the localised preoccupations of Australian society and contribute to a greater understanding of the centrality of the monarch in inter-war imperial imagination.

I offer three major findings. Firstly, the most prominent and enduring perceptions of Edward's character that underpinned his particular appeal across time are now clear. For Australians of the inter-war period, he was perceived as the ideal modern man, embodying a series of desirable masculine characteristics that reflect much of the cultural and social dynamics of the time. Edward's earliest, and as it would turn out, most important role in public life was as a symbol of the Crown; the next in a natural

¹ 'LONG LIVE THE KING!', *The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, Qld., 11 December 1936, p. 18.

progression of Kings and Queens to occupy the throne at the apex of imperial authority. As enshrined in the dominant educational and political prerogatives of the time, his office perpetuated the cohesion of Empire governance, although this operated comfortably alongside the Dominions growing sense of independence during the time frame.

Other characteristics were intensely specific to the man himself. By the end of the First World War, his persona would acquire an inspirational and militarised cast that faithfully adhered to the most desirable qualities for the contemporary Australian male. His wartime experience was perceived as evidence for his humanity and empathy for common struggles. During the 1920s, Edward's reported foibles and fascinations exemplified for many the challenges faced by any individual living in the modern world. In the context of an already prevalent contemporary fondness for royal material and visual culture, he also acquired a warm familiarity in an everyday context, meaning that Australians were readily able to identify points of resonance with his private life and their own aspirations for marriage and fulfilment.

Although resonant across the timeframe discussed, the value placed on these qualities ebbed and flowed. This I attribute to the shifting terms of one of the most significant Australian debates of the era; that of the changing obligations of the individual to themselves and to the nation state between two world wars. In the earlier years under consideration, Australians favoured qualities that accentuated Edward's humanity, and were held to conform to the contemporary masculine ideal. Over time, and in response to reports of his behaviour in his private life, the emphasis shifted to the other extreme and the same qualities were reimagined as demonstrating his lack of dedication to his duty.

A second significant contribution is to offer a new perspective charting these local contours of Edward's public life between his first encounter with Anzacs during

wartime to the ignominy of his departure from the throne. I have shown how his assumed progressive brand of masculinity would initially be celebrated alongside the surge of imperial optimism generated by the end of the First World War, so much so that I argue this is largely responsible for his popularity during his tour of Australia in 1920. The victory in Europe created a new era of Australian nationalistic self-confidence that paradoxically both enhanced imperial sentiment and sparked apprehension in London over Dominion independence. My research revealed the myriad ways the tour's administration, both British and Australian, successfully capitalised on existing support for the monarchy and presented the inexperienced and easily overwhelmed young man as the antidote to the fragmentation of the post-war Empire. The itinerary that resulted was mutually beneficial to both visitor and host, although most powerfully shaped by Australian opportunism.

The long-term significance of his tour in enhancing Australia's inter-war imperial connection to Britain has been somewhat overstated. I suspect that, although the tour was doubtless extraordinarily well-attended, other elements such as the provision of a paid holiday across the nation and the opportunity to participate in civic spectacle arranged for a celebrated personage were likely significant factors. I demonstrated how the Prince's speech writers, photographers, cinematographers and journalists all held authority in transmitting the tour's validation of imperial loyalty to Australian and British observers.

This is not to diminish the tour's impact as a triumph of popular spectacle and a memorable national event in the eyes of Australian observers. In conservative middle-class quarters, approval centred on Edward's apparent capacity to adhere to a code of leadership calculated to maintain the cohesion and longevity of the throne, albeit behind a popularly-appealing façade. For more liberal and labour movements, varying degrees of approval, or at least tolerance, of the individuality of the monarch was assured on the

condition that their democratic behaviour served the greater good of humanity and did not seek to take advantage of their unearned privilege. Although those who dissented in 1920 mostly suspended their objections during the visit, this was temporary and the Prince's personality appears to have barely disturbed deeply held Australian labour beliefs. Australians were well able to differentiate between the monarch as a man and as a symbol of Empire dominance, and nationalist endeavours continued unabated.

I also found that the notion of the Prince as a genuinely beloved individual is not sustained by the way Australian expectations for his private and public life changed after the tour. Part of this can be attributed to Australian access to both British and American commentary, which enabled more realistic perceptions of his character and attitudes to his duty. The heightened public awareness of Edward's failings was in itself specific to the age, created as it was by the candid and irreverent nature of modern journalism and the greater access to overseas information generated by the expansion of news agencies in the post-war period. The balance of emphasis between Australian love for Edward as an individual and respect for the leadership qualities of the future monarch shifted as he himself aged and as Australians encountered the uncertainties of the later 1920s. This paradox between private fulfilment and national obligation correlates with the resonance of the same inter-generational debate within society of the time. Australian political and popular attitudes towards the monarch were remarkably flexible, on the condition that he or she continued to uphold their obligations to the state. In contrast, attitudes towards the monarch's personal fulfilment were markedly restrictive. The monarch was held to much higher moral standards that did not reflect changing social mores. By the time of Edward's accession as King, these same qualities for which he had been celebrated would fatally conflict with his dedication to duty as Australia faced the prospect of a second war in Europe.

Thirdly, this thesis' final major contribution is to offer a new Australian narrative for Edward's abdication in 1936, one of the most significant imperial events of the twentieth century. Edward's fall from favour illustrates most clearly that Australians of all political shades held an exclusive set of expectations for the private and public life of the monarch. Ultimately, the abdication encapsulated the debate mentioned above. In this case, the question was manipulated to appear as one of legal repercussions, and the decision rested with the educated and pro-imperial ruling sections of political society. In a sense, once the British and Dominion governments had conceded that his behaviour was unsuitable for a monarch, there could be no other outcome but exile.

In the eyes of many Australians, but by no means all, Edward fell short of expectations for the impartiality and longevity of the Crown as a governing entity. If on one hand the press had inflated Edward's public persona, it also proved his undoing. The enthusiastic response to the royal tours of the 1920s may have persuaded Edward that he was genuinely popular and his enjoyment of his private life could be maintained, even after his public façade slipped after becoming King. Unlike Britain, the Australian press were more receptive to incoming news reporting from America and reproduced information on Edward's unsuitable relationship for the edification of their readers. This, I argue, lessened the shock of the abdication to some degree, as some Australians were conversant with the matter prior to the official announcement. This allowed public opinion to form in advance.

As Edward himself had agreed to relinquish the throne so as to be able to live a contented private life with Wallis, he made no move to influence the terms of the messages sent to the Dominions and was later prevented from communicating directly with the people of the Empire. To those in Australia, it was not therefore evident that the King had not been coerced, and the absence of any official information it was left to the press to make sense of the situation. This meant the abdication was largely

perceived as a 'crisis' where constitutional connections could be damaged and the supposedly volatile and unpredictable monarch's political ambitions would be challenged. As a result, Australians were most eager to see the matter settled without damage to the links between the Dominions.

As far as the government was concerned, the issue presented by Baldwin in the correspondence was Wallis' moral unsuitability as future Queen. Lyons correctly predicted the majority of Australian responses, some embracing modernity, others holding onto the traditional morality of the older generations. This demonstrates Lyons' astute political acumen, as this trend was neither the first response of Australian public opinion nor the most vocal, but it was the decisive and enduring one. In the initial stages, one strand of public opinion sympathised with the King's dilemma but nonetheless felt he should abandon his marriage as his particular qualities of statesmanship were needed to guide the Empire through the encroaching war in Europe. As time wore on, a subsection of society expressed the view that the situation had passed the point of compromise and Edward must abdicate. Throughout, there was a modest body of Australians, possibly the younger generations, who offered only sympathy and understanding for the trials of the modern man, believing Edward must remain on the throne at all costs even if this entailed some form of marriage to Wallis.

From all perspectives, the abdication rocked notions of morality, appeared to challenge constitutional principles, and threatened the continued existence of the monarchy as the binding link between Britain and the Dominions. Despite the protestations of the more progressive element of the population, ultimately this debate had little meaning. Whatever the attitudes of these Australians to their own private lives, the royal family was held to adhere to a distinct suite of outdated and unyielding moral codes. Despite the perceived flexibility of the political and legal elements of the

monarch's role, there existed a prevalent expectation that the monarch should embody the highest moral and religious standards.

Nonetheless, the debate over the King's morality was secondary to widespread protestations concerning another significant issue at stake: the apparently subservient attitude of the Australian government in their dealings with Britain. Although Lyons correctly judged the mood of the Australian population towards Edward, their attitude towards his own role in proceedings was unforgiving. Lyons was anxious to avoid interfering in the relationship between the King and the British government, but in doing so had neglected his own constitutional rights of communication, and his obligation to represent Australia's independent position. His apparent passivity in Dominion affairs was criticised as an affront to the democratic people of Australia, an independent nation intent on moderating the boundaries of the imperial relationship in their own best interests. Generally, more attention was directed towards Lyons' management of the situation, rather than the more obvious issue at stake; that of the rights of the modern individual. Once again, the mainstream press successfully shaped public opinion by promoting the new King to the detriment of the old one, and Edward gradually disappeared forever from Australian public consciousness.

By revealing some of the foundation for the deep inter-war attachment to the monarchy, I have suggested that scholars need to rethink current conclusions about Australians and their connection to the Empire. Changing perceptions of Edward's public life over time serve, on one hand, to underscore the strength of secular support for the Crown that buttressed both political and popular imagination, but are also revealing of its highly selective and nuanced nature. Post-war Australian perceptions of Edward's suitability to lead the Empire were gilded by the apparent advantages offered by his winning and youthful personality, which seemed to mirror the progressive modernism of the age. The longevity of the Crown may be attributable to its capacity

for reinvention across multiple political and legislative spheres and, to a significant extent, cultural changes. However, Edward's inter-war public life proved that the moral standard expected of the royal family by contemporary Australians was resolute. Despite appearances to the contrary, members of the royal family cannot readily embody social changes such as sexual modernity.

This is not to say that there was no support for Edward's position. Although modernity divided Australia along generational lines, initial staunch support for the King's private happiness quickly dwindled. His father and brother displayed a better understanding of this distinction but Edward's apparent popularity as an individual may have caused him to misconstrue this as enduring support for his inherited office. The destruction of his attractive public persona, so closely aligned with the ideal Australian male, was also perceived as a blow to Australia's own imperial identity and the loss of his particular qualities was lamented. Generally, however, in Australia ostensible support for an egalitarian and democratic monarch sat uneasily to some extent with an obscured but pervasive underlying need to preserve connections to Britain. This supposedly 'free' association within the Commonwealth would persevere mostly in this form until the early 1960s. Concern for the survival of monarchy correlated with its capacity as a means to realise nationalistic aspirations. This political consensus was upheld by the aspirational middle-classes and educated pro-imperial properties ruling sections of society, whose concerns became ever more acute when faced with a second war in Europe. Australian support gathered for an appropriately dutiful and moral monarch who understood this position to be swiftly crowned.

This thesis leaves a number of viable directions for future research. Firstly, a consequence of the analysis of Edward's public life in Australia suggests that a comparative study of the inter-war attitudes of the other white settler Dominions towards their monarch might reveal much about the cultural trajectory of the Empire.

Further to this, I do not here consider Edward's public life in any comparative sense with monarchs who came before or after him. A study contrasting Australian perceptions of the introverted King George V, for example, and his gregarious eldest son suggests itself, but the hapless figures of King George IV and Charles, Prince of Wales, also offer intriguing possibilities.

A better understanding of Australian twentieth century perceptions of the monarchy, and their comparative Dominion context can only serve to better inform understandings of present day Australian attitudes towards the current royal family. The present generation includes members who have fallen foul of the necessary moral standards, and yet also includes others who are held up as exemplars for companionable marriage and reproductive continuity. Adherence to traditional modes of sexuality and domesticity is evidently still favoured by the monarchy as a tested means of ensuring public approval. With the present Queen's reign approaching its final stages and perhaps the imminent revival of the debate over an Australian republic, Edward's Australian public life is confirmed as a significant milestone in this country's inter-war relationship with the monarchy.

Appendix



Image 1 A portrait of a young Prince of Wales following his investiture in 1911. Item 1986.0117.4890, Josef Lebovic collection, NMA.



Image 2 This Empire Day commemorative medallion features 'Our Empire Prince', 1926. Author's own.



Image 3 Soldier Charles Elliott took this photograph showing the Prince with Anzacs at Serapeum, Egypt, in 1916. Item NS669-17-1-77, AOT.



Image 4 Anzacs had further interactions with the Prince of Wales during celebrations held in London in 1919. Item 1986.0117.3989, Josef Lebovic collection, NMA.



Image 5 The Prince's unfussy modern clothing sparked a corresponding trend in fashions across the Empire. 'LASKER'S', *Smith's Weekly*, Sydney, N.S.W., 5 June 1920, p. 13.



Image 6 This souvenir lapel pin produced for the 1920 royal tour offered a romantic perception of the Prince. Author's own.



Image 7 Samuel Wells caricatured the royal party in *Punch* of June 1920. Reproduced in Mountbatten, *The diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten 1920-1922* (London: Collins, 1987), no pagination.



Image 8 Hughes in company of members of his government and the royal family outside Australia House in London in 1918. Item M4063, 1, NAA.



Image 9 As satirised by Cecil Hart, Indigenous Australians were largely excluded from the royal tour itinerary. 'KING BILLY', *Smith's Weekly*, Sydney, N.S.W., 19 June 1920, p. 24.

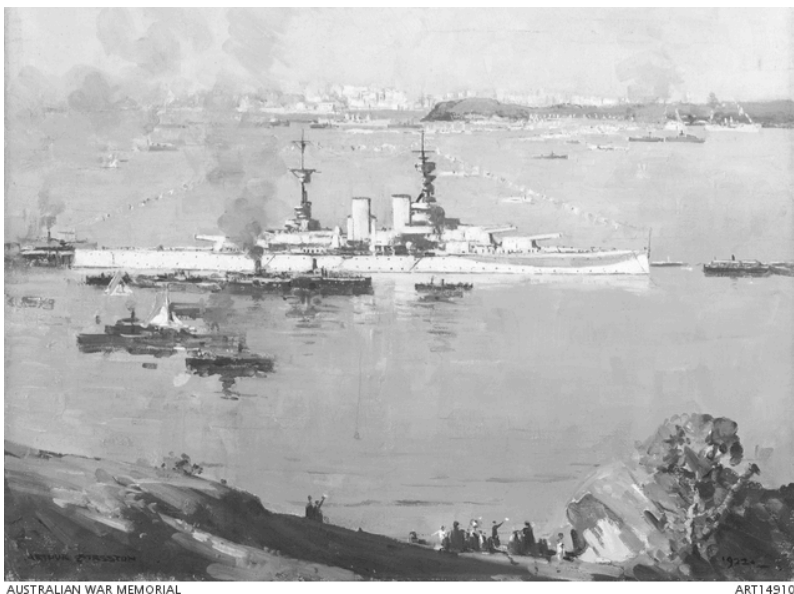


Image 10 H.M.S. *Renown* as later depicted by Australian artist Arthur Streeton in 1922. Item ART14910, AWM.



Image 11 The Commonwealth Cinematographer, Bert Ive, in 1914. Bert Ive, unpublished personal scrapbook, item 358126, NFSA.



Image 12 The inner retinue of H.M.S. *Renown*, depicted relaxing on board by Samuel Begg. 'H.M.S. *Renown*', *The Illustrated London News*, London: UK, 10 April 1920, p.



Image 13 Crowds awaiting the arrival of the Prince at St Kilda. Reproduced in unknown author, *Souvenir, Prince of Wales visit to Australia 1920*, p. 66.



Image 14 People's Receptions, as seen here in Brisbane, Queensland, appeared throughout the itinerary. Item 193590, JOLSLQ.



Image 15 Some despaired of the mainstream press' attitude to the Prince, as seen in this work by an unknown cartoonist published in the *Bulletin* during the royal tour, reproduced in Peter Coleman and Les Tanner, *Cartoons of Australian history* (Melbourne, Vic.: Nelson, 1967), p. 69.



Image 16 As seen at Keswick Hospital in South Australia, Edward's itinerary included meetings with ex-servicemen. Item B 26285/270, SLSA.



Image 17 Crowds lined Macquarie St. during Sydney's royal progress. Reproduced in unknown author, *Souvenir, Prince of Wales visit to Australia 1920*, p. 64.

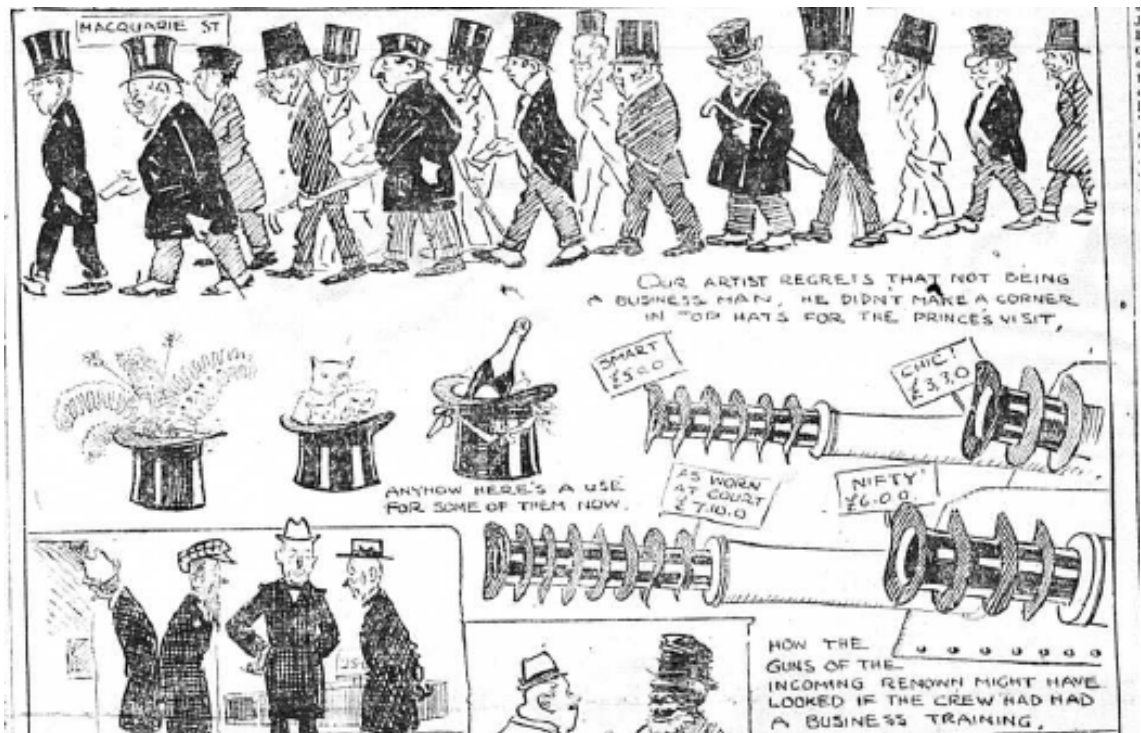


Image 18 As cartoonist Alex Sass wryly commented, all shades of the Sydney populace felt compelled to dress up for the Prince's arrival. Detail from 'MACQUARIE ST', *Smith's Weekly*, Sydney, N.S.W., 26 June 1920, p. 11.

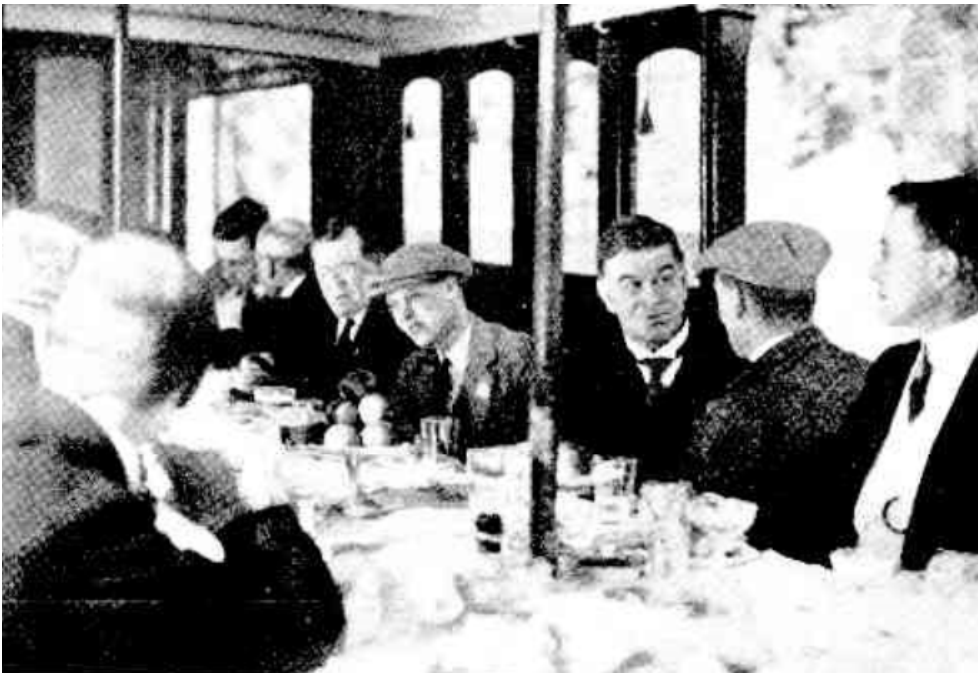


Image 19 Although the newspaper heading that accompanied this image foretold of a ‘delightful excursion’, Edward did not enjoy his cruise on the Hawkesbury river. *Sydney Mail*, N.S.W., 30 June 1920, p. 17.



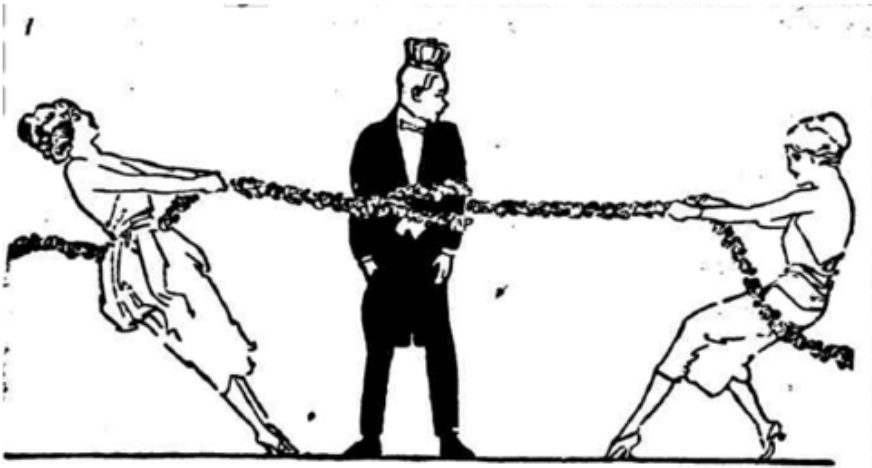
Image 20 Aboriginal residents of the mission at Ooldea, South Australia, were instructed to perform for the royal party at a railway stop. Still from *50,000 miles with the Prince of Wales*, reel 3.



Image 21 The Prince's affinity with Australia's white children was emphasised, as seen here in this contemporary illustration by Agnes Gladys Holman. Unknown author, *Our digger Prince with the Australian kiddies* (London: John L. Bennett, 1921), p. 5. Item SRq 823.912 H747ur, NLA.



Image 22 Edward's masculinity in 1920 was perceived in military terms. Author's own.



"There is a very real 'tug-of-war' for the Prince's heart, a situation that can hardly happen in the case of any other man."

Image 23 The Prince's choice of a bride was closely scrutinised from all quarters. 'Who Will Be England's Future Queen?', *The World's News*, Sydney, N.S.W., 11 December 1920, p. 8.



Image 24 Portrait of Albert, Duke of York, mid 1920s. Item PIC P850 230/5/1, NLA.



Image 25 The Duke and Duchess wave to Sydney crowds during their tour of 1927.

Item PIC/15611/482, Fairfax archives, NLA.



Image 26 Portrait of Wallis Simpson in 1931. Reproduced in Higham, *Wallis*, no pagination.



Image 27 Stanley Bruce and Joseph Lyons, Sydney, New South Wales, in 1934. Item obj-157855844, Fairfax archives, NLA.



Image 28 Edward and Wallis were photographed together in Croatia in September 1936. 'KING'S HOLIDAY CRUISE IN THE ADRIATIC', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 September 1936, p. 18.



Image 29 As Stan Cross commented, from the King’s perspective it appeared that he had no support within the Empire. ‘THE THINKER’, *Smith’s Weekly*, 12 December 1936, p. 16.



Image 30 Many were incensed over perceptions of Baldwin’s role. ‘Mr Baldwin Turns Dictator’, *The Australian Worker*, Sydney, N.S.W., 9 December 1936, p. 3.



Image 31 Lyons in conversation with Baldwin, 10 December 1936. Item 8303852, NLA.



Image 32 Lyons first discussed the abdication by radio during the early hours of 11 December. 'RECENT PICTURES', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1936, p. 20.



Image 33 The former King's final message to the Empire was broadcast from Windsor Castle on 12 December. Reproduced from Stephen Birmingham, *Duchess: The story of Wallis Warfield Windsor* (London: Macmillan, 1982), no pagination.



Image 34 The proclamation of King George VI was held in King's Hall, Parliament House on 12 December. Item 3821009, Collingridge collection, NLA.

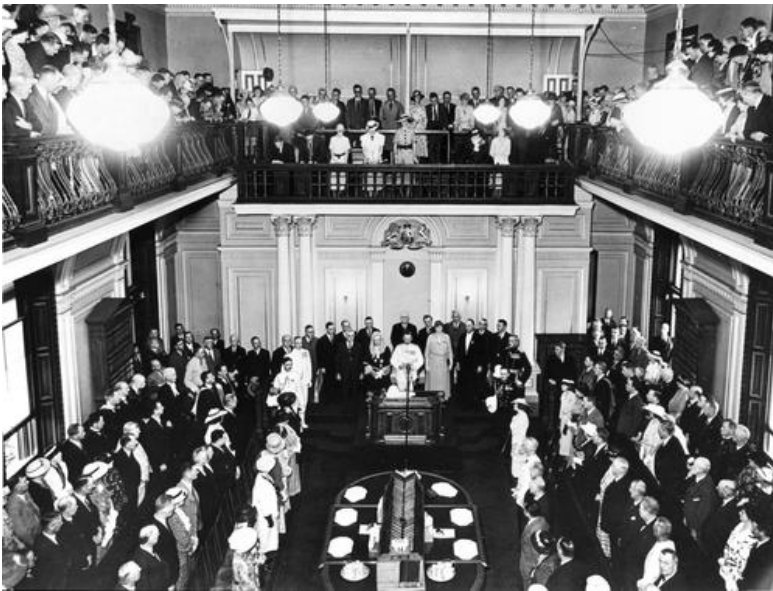


Image 35 Proclamation ceremonies were held in every state on 14 December 1936, as seen here at Parliament House, Brisbane, Queensland. Item 41071, JOLSLQ.

Farewell! A Long Farewell, to all my Greatness!



Image 36 Some compared Edward's foiled political ambitions with those of Cardinal Wolsey in Shakespeare's *Henry the Eighth*. 'Farewell!', *The Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, Tas., 11 December 1936, p. 16.



Image 37 Enterprising commercial vendors simply pasted over the face of the former King with that of the new. Items AR00165.001-2, King Edward VIII collection, NMA.

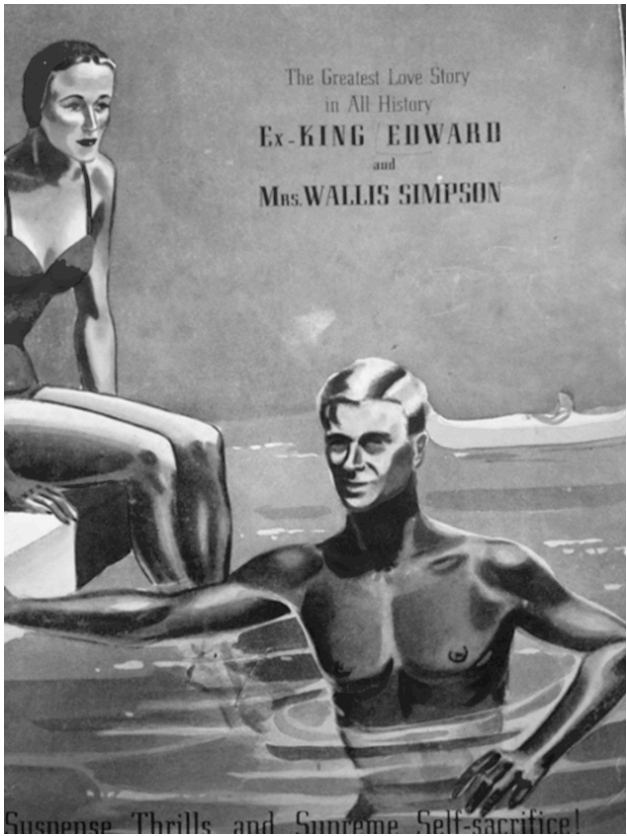


Image 38 The story of Edward and Wallis inspired writers of pulp fiction. Cover of unknown author, *The Uncensored story of a royal romance*.

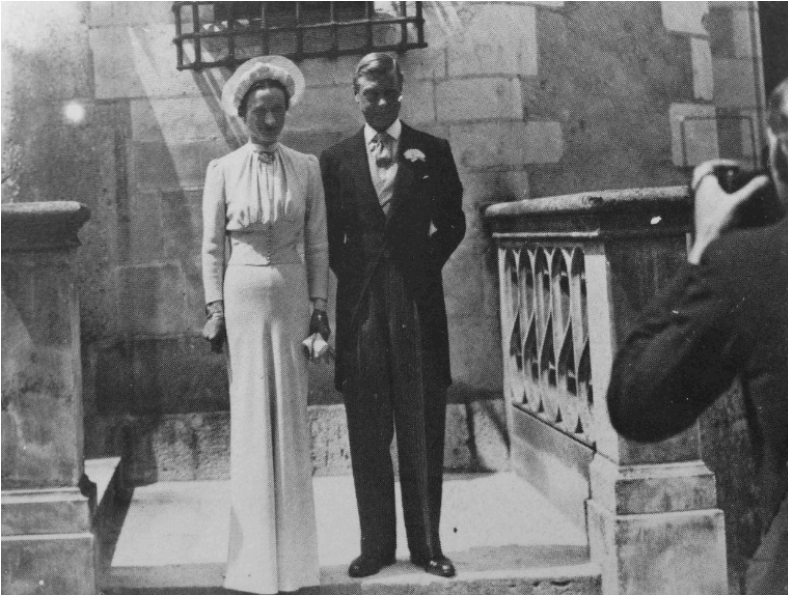


Image 39 Wallis and Edward were married in front of friends at Château de Candé in June 1937. Reproduced from Birmingham, *Duchess: The story of Wallis Warfield Windsor*, no pagination.



Image 40 The seeds of the couple's later notoriety were sown within months of their wedding, when they met cordially with Hitler in Germany in October 1937. 'DUKE OF WINDSOR MEETS HITLER', *The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, Qld., 5 November 1937, p. 14.

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